



JAMES MALISZEWSKI

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# THOUSAND SUNS

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RULEBOOK

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IMPERIAL SCIENCE FICTION



## It is a time of wonder.

Humanity has reached the stars and created a society of glittering sophistication and diversity on hundreds of planets. Poets declaim, lovers rendezvous, and rakes duel with wits and monoblades. Colonists settle virgin worlds, merchant princes vie for emerging markets, and free traders hawk their exotic wares. The Navy rules the jumplines, putting down pirates and charting new star systems. Scientists uncover startling new truths on long-dead worlds and posit revolutionary theories dizzying in their implications. Technology advances at a rapid pace, each year improving the lot of all who accept its boons. None dare deny the bright destiny Man has seized for himself.

## It is a time of upheaval.

The inhabited galaxy—the Thousand Suns—teeters on the brink of chaos. Half a millennium since the Concord, and a generation since the bloody Civil War, the dynamism that ended the Age of Warring States is sorely tested. Diplomats try new gambits, shifting their ground for an unknown future. On dozens of worlds across known space, the lights are going out again and the process of decivilization begins anew. Despots and tyrants who would rather lord it over benighted backwaters than bend their knees to even a distant authority, arise once more. At the edges of explored space, rivals—both human and alien—watch and wait.

## It is a time of glory.

Victorious fleets smash enemy armadas in distant star systems. Soldiers parade through liberated planets to alien cheers. Sector governors draw up breathtaking visions of terraforming and orbital cities. New jumplines open to the heart of unexplored space, daring the bold to venture into the unknown for profit and peril. Surveyors stumble upon lost colonies and puzzle out the mysteries of inscrutable clades. Captains with blazing eyes save worlds from barbarism—and rule them as gods. Daring thieves turn new technologies to unexpected ends or sell them to shadowy cartels on the fringes of known space. Meanwhile, bold operatives seek out these criminal plans for reprisal. Everything is possible with enough beauty, brains, or blasters, and it's all within reach of a single jump.

## It is a time of adventure.

*Newly revised and expanded, this edition of **Thousand Suns** builds upon what has come before and presents new options and guidelines for running a roleplaying campaign inspired by the classic works of Imperial science fiction.*



Thousand Suns is powered by the 12 Degrees game system and produced by Grognardia Games.

JAMES MALISZEWSKI

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# THOUSAND SUNS

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RULEBOOK

"This was a Golden Age, a time of high adventure, rich living, and hard dying ... but nobody thought so. This was a future of fortune and theft, pillage and rapine, culture and vice ... but nobody admitted it."

— Alfred Bester, *The Stars, My Destination* (1956)

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IMPERIAL SCIENCE FICTION

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*DEDICATIONS* ■ To the memories of H. Beam Piper and Poul Anderson — you lit the fire  
To Marc Miller, Loren Wiseman, and Dave Nilsen — you kept the flame  
To Mary and Peter — you inherit the future

*THOUSAND SUNS* created by James Maliszewski.

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A scout vessel approaching a world in the Marches.

# CHAPTER 1: A PRIMER

Gully Foyle is my name  
And Terra is my nation.  
Deep space is my dwelling place,  
The stars my destination.

—Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (1956)



# CHAPTER 1: A PRIMER

Every age has its myths and many of the central myths of the 20<sup>th</sup> century took the form of science fiction. Science promised humanity the knowledge of the inner workings of the universe and science's daughter, technology, promised the ability to harness those inner workings to improve the species's lot in life — a heady brew for the imagination that flowered into the literary genre we call science fiction. From humble beginnings in the scientific romances and speculations of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and others, science fiction came into its own in the years between the World Wars, as the readers of pulp magazines thrilled to the adventures of Kimball Kinnison, Buck Rogers, and other space-faring heroes whose tales evoked both wonder at the possibilities the future might bring, as well as hope for a better world.

These same themes would form the foundation upon which much of later science fiction was built and then expanded upon throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, when many talented writers remade what had been derisively called “space opera” into a sub-genre of remarkable depth and sophistication. It is from this sub-genre of science fiction that *THOUSAND SUNS* proudly takes its primary inspiration.

## THE GAME

*THOUSAND SUNS* is a science fiction roleplaying game set in a future when humanity has traveled into the far reaches of the galaxy, colonized new worlds, encountered other intelligent species, and established interstellar states by which to govern itself. The game draws much of its inspiration from the classic literary “imperial” science fiction of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, so called because its stories typically featured mighty galactic empires and whose plots often hearkened back to events from the Age of Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Authors like Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Gordon Dickson, Larry Niven, H. Beam Piper, Jerry Pournelle, and A.E. van Vogt are but a few of the most prominent writers of this sub-genre of science fiction and all have influenced the design of *THOUSAND SUNS* in one way or another. Of course, many contemporary authors, such as Iain M. Banks, Lois McMaster Bujold, Peter F. Hamilton, David Weber, and Walter John Williams, among others, have written books with similar plots and themes yet with a more modern perspective. *THOUSAND SUNS* also looks to them for inspiration.

In *THOUSAND SUNS*, a character hails from one of hundreds of settled planets. Numerous species, whether alien, human, or genetically engineered clade, call these planets home. Likewise, representatives of these species come from all walks of life, from highly trained naval officers to determined explorers to wily merchants to almost any other vocation imaginable. As he travels the galaxy, he might explore alien ruins, engage in dogfights with enemy fighters, re-contact a lost colony world, fly amidst the spires of a world-city, or take up a life of trading. Despite the wealth of inspiration it draws from the classics of literary sci-fi, *THOUSAND SUNS* is not a game about recreating them; it is about using their plots, ideas, and themes as springboards to create new science fiction adventures in which the players become both authors and participants.

Science fiction is really about the present, not the future. Consequently, a lot of older science fiction — including the works that inspired *THOUSAND SUNS* — feels somewhat dated because the concerns of the time when they were written don't always translate well across the decades. Older science fiction often joined a wide-eyed sense of wonder with an



A Terran exploring the moon of a gas giant.

appreciation for classical archetypes that's generally lacking in either the jaded cynicism of cyberpunk or the naive optimism of transhumanist SF of the present day. *THOUSAND SUNS* is an attempt to marry the best of the past to the best of the present to create exciting space opera roleplaying adventures in the imperial SF tradition.

Imperial science fiction — whether classic or contemporary — is a vast genre, both in terms of scope and diversity. Of necessity, it takes place over a large canvas, with hundreds, even thousands, of worlds as potential sites for adventures. Having such a large canvas allows it to encompass almost any kind of science fiction story, big or small. This makes it even easier to create whatever adventures appeal to the Game Master and his players. The real trick is to give them all that classic SF “spark,” that connection to the grand themes of the genre, including (but not limited to) humanity's glorious destiny among the stars.

The rules of *THOUSAND SUNS* were written with the grand themes of space opera in mind. They are flexible, easy to understand, and modular. This gives the Game Master a toolbox with which to add, subtract or emphasize whatever elements he wishes without having to worry about its effect on other parts of the game. These rules do not model the hard science realism found in some science fiction. Instead, these rules support the “wow” moments found in the older classics of the genre.

*THOUSAND SUNS* gives the GM the tools he needs to imagine a setting where the human race has left behind the cradle of Earth and ventured into the Great Unknown to find its place in the galaxy. The game rules are intended to make this responsibility as simple — and fun — as possible, because detailing the setting and running adventures should be every bit as enjoyable an experience as playing them.

Strap on a blaster pistol, grab a spacesuit, and get ready to explore a vision of the future unlike any seen in a generation.

## THE META-SETTING

“The Thousand Suns” is what poet Johane Coelho (–29–112) called that part of the Milky Way galaxy accessible by the jumplines of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map. The Map, an artifact of the Travelers discovered on Mars (Terra/Hejmo) in –1783, actually provided the coordinates for vastly more than a thousand solar systems, but Coelho's turn of phrase — “a future brighter than a thousand suns” — has stuck, even long after explorers have nearly tripled the number of worlds accessible to D-drive vessels.

— *Encyclopedia Galactica*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition (494)

The rules of *THOUSAND SUNS* cover character creation, personal and starship combat, generating alien worlds, species, and creatures, as well as a myriad of other circumstances that might occur over the course of play. *THOUSAND SUNS* is a toolkit for the creation of a wide variety of settings in the imperial SF tradition. But not everyone wishes to create his own setting from scratch or without at least some examples to inspire him. For that reason, *THOUSAND SUNS* also includes a setting of its own — or, more accurately, a *meta-setting*.

What is a meta-setting? Think of it as a large canvas on which the outline of a picture has already been sketched but many of whose details — not to mention color and shading — have not been filled in. This meta-setting, after which the game is named, is a large area of space encompassing thousands of star systems and planets and is home to dozens of intelligent species besides humanity. Some of these worlds and species are named and described, but the vast majority of them are left to individual Game Masters to describe and use as they wish (or not, as the case may be). This approach applies to everything in the *Thousand Suns* meta-setting, which is intended as a spur to one's imagination rather than as an “official” setting for *THOUSAND SUNS*.

Elements of the meta-setting are used as examples throughout this book and are described in some detail in **Chapters 14** and **15**. Game Masters are encouraged to use them, alter them, or drop them entirely according to their own desires. After all, the best Imperial science fiction setting is the one that *you* create for your own campaign.

## 12°

Everything needed to play *THOUSAND SUNS* is found in this book. The basics presented in this chapter should allow anyone to quickly understand the mechanical foundations of the game upon which later chapters are built. Of course, *THOUSAND SUNS* isn't a very complex game. Most of its rules are fairly straightforward and easy to remember. Nevertheless, there are a handful of occasions when multiple modifiers and special cases come into play. The better one understands the basic rules presented in this chapter, the better equipped one is to deal with those few exceptions.

## PLAYING THE GAME

To play *THOUSAND SUNS* requires a few things:

- **First**, two twelve-sided dice (D12). The GM might want to have a few more handy.
- **Second**, a blank piece of paper (or a character sheet, like the one at the back of this book) and a pencil.
- **Third**, an idea of the kind of character you'd like to play.

## RULES OVERVIEW

Before delving further into *THOUSAND SUNS*, let's talk briefly about the core mechanic behind the game itself.

Action in *THOUSAND SUNS* isn't intended to be “realistic” or “gritty.” Rather, it's meant to recreate the type of action found in literary space opera. This isn't to say action in *THOUSAND SUNS* is cartoonish or ridiculously over the top, but the emphasis is on verisimilitude and plausibility rather than a strict simulation of reality. The game's rules, known as **12°**, are designed to accommodate this style of play with ease.

Every action, regardless of whether a character is firing his blaster at a Myrmidon soldier or engaging in diplomacy with an alien satrap, is handled the same way. Roll two



twelve-sided dice — 2D12 — and if the result is equal to or less than the target number (TN), the action succeeds. It's as simple as that.

A TN is based on the ranks of the pertinent skill and the ability associated with it, plus or minus any modifiers. For example, if a character wants to shoot a blaster and has the skill Shoot at rank 6 and a Dexterity (the ability associated with Shoot) score of 6, the TN is 12. Rolling 2D12 and getting a result of 11, which is lower than the TN of 12, is thus a success; rolling and getting a result of 23, however, is a failure.

## TESTS

All actions in *THOUSAND SUNS* are called tests. There are three types of tests — ability, skill, and opposed — that depend on specific situations; the Game Master explains what type of test is needed if it is not obvious.

### SKILL TESTS

Skill tests are the most common tests used in *THOUSAND SUNS*. Most actions, from shooting a blaster to piloting a starship, are handled by skill tests. The target number in a skill test equals a character's skill rank plus the score of the skill's associated ability, plus or minus any bonus or penalties associated with the test. The resulting number is what one must roll under in order to succeed.

For example, a character is piloting his starship, a routine test. Unfortunately, the character is attempting to pilot his ship through a debris field. The character's Piloting skill is 7 and his Agility is 6, making the TN 13. Due to the thickness of the debris, your GM assesses the character a -4 penalty, which lowers the character's TN to 9 for this test.

### UNTRAINED SKILL TESTS

There are occasions when a character may attempt to use a skill even if he does not possess ranks in it, because the skill in question is something most people can do, even if not very well. Skills that can be used untrained have the "untrained" descriptor after their listing in **Chapter 5** (see *Skill List*, p. 80). The target number of such a test is either the associated ability -2 or the associated ability -4, depending on whether the GM decides the test is easy or difficult for an untrained person.

For example, a character without any formal training in the use of computers is attempting to locate information in a public database. This is a comparatively easy task, so the TN is equal to the character's Perception -2. If, on the other hand, the same character were to try to hack into a protected system, his TN would be Perception -4 instead.

### OPPOSED TESTS

Opposed tests are tests between multiple characters, usually occurring when a character is competing against another player character or is acting against a non-player character. Opposed tests require two or more parties to make a test; whoever achieves the most degrees of success (p. 16) is the victor. Opposed tests can also come into play for some specific skills, such as Stealth, as well as in combat.

For example, a character is trying to sneak into a protected research laboratory. There is one guard keeping watch and the GM states that he has a chance of noticing the character sneaking into the camp. The GM asks for a Stealth test, while the GM makes an Observe test for the guard. Rolling the dice the player's result is a 4 (the TN was 12) — eight degrees of success! The GM, rolling for the guard (whose TN is 9), rolls an 8 — only one degree of

success. The character easily sneaks into the camp, while the guard standing watch fails to notice him.

### ROUNDING FRACTIONS

Generally, if the rules of *THOUSAND SUNS* ask you to divide a number, you should drop all fractions. That means that, if you divide 3 by 2, the result is not 1½ but 1; similarly, dividing 8 by 3 is not 2.67 but 2. Except in a few rare circumstances, this is a universal rule and, if it does not apply, the rules will specifically tell you so.

## SUCCESS AND FAILURE

As long as a player rolls a number equal to his character's target number or lower, the character succeeds in his actions. Anytime he rolls higher than the TN, his character fails. In some cases, a character may also experience a dramatic success or a dramatic failure.

### DRAMATIC SUCCESS

Anytime roll of "2" on a 2D12 is a dramatic success. The meaning of a dramatic success varies with the type of test, but it typically means that a character has not only succeeded but succeeded in a spectacular, memorable fashion. In combat, a dramatic success indicates that a character has dealt his opponent maximum damage for his weapon type, whereas in a skill test it indicates that he was achieved all he was attempting and more.

### DRAMATIC FAILURE

Rolling a "24" on a 2D12 is a dramatic failure. What this means is that a character not only failed his test, but he performed his action so badly that he has either placed himself in danger or otherwise adversely affected himself (and possibly his companions). In combat, a dramatic failure indicates that a character's weapon suffered a jam or malfunction, while in a skill test it indicates that he is either badly mistaken or have failed in such a way so as to make the situation more precarious.

## DEGREES OF SUCCESS

As one might expect in a game system called 12°, your character's degree of success is often important. The degree of success is the amount by which one rolls under a character's target number. For example, if a character's TN is 14 and the roll is 11, the degree of success is 3. In combat, the degree of success acts as a multiplier to a weapon's base damage. Using the above example, if a character is firing a blaster rifle with a base damage value of 9 and achieves 3 degrees of success, he would deal 27 points of damage to his opponent. In skill use, degrees of success have a much more "impressionistic" meaning, assessed by the GM based on his interpretation of how much better a character did than he needed to do. This is discussed in **Chapters 5** (*Degrees of Success*, p. 75) and **6** (*Personal Combat Basics*, p. 90).

## BONUSES AND PENALTIES

Sometimes, depending on the situation, a character gains a bonus or penalty to a test. These modifiers will change the target number of the test, making it easier (or harder) for a character to achieve what he wants. Bonuses and penalties are never applied to the die roll; they are added (or subtracted) directly to the TN.

The GM determines situations in an adventure and assess bonuses or penalties. For example, suppose a player character wants to fire a blaster while riding in a speeding grav car. Typically, firing a blaster is a Routine test, incurring no penalty, but firing from a moving vehicle is much more challenging. The GM decides that, due to the nature of this task, the player suffers a -2 penalty while firing from a moving vehicle.

**Chapter 5** (see *Skill Test Modifiers*, p. 74) provides numerous examples of modifiers. In addition, Game Masters are encouraged to use their own judgment when assigning bonuses and penalties rather than treating the suggestions offered there as the final word on the subject.

## HOOKS AND ACTION POINTS

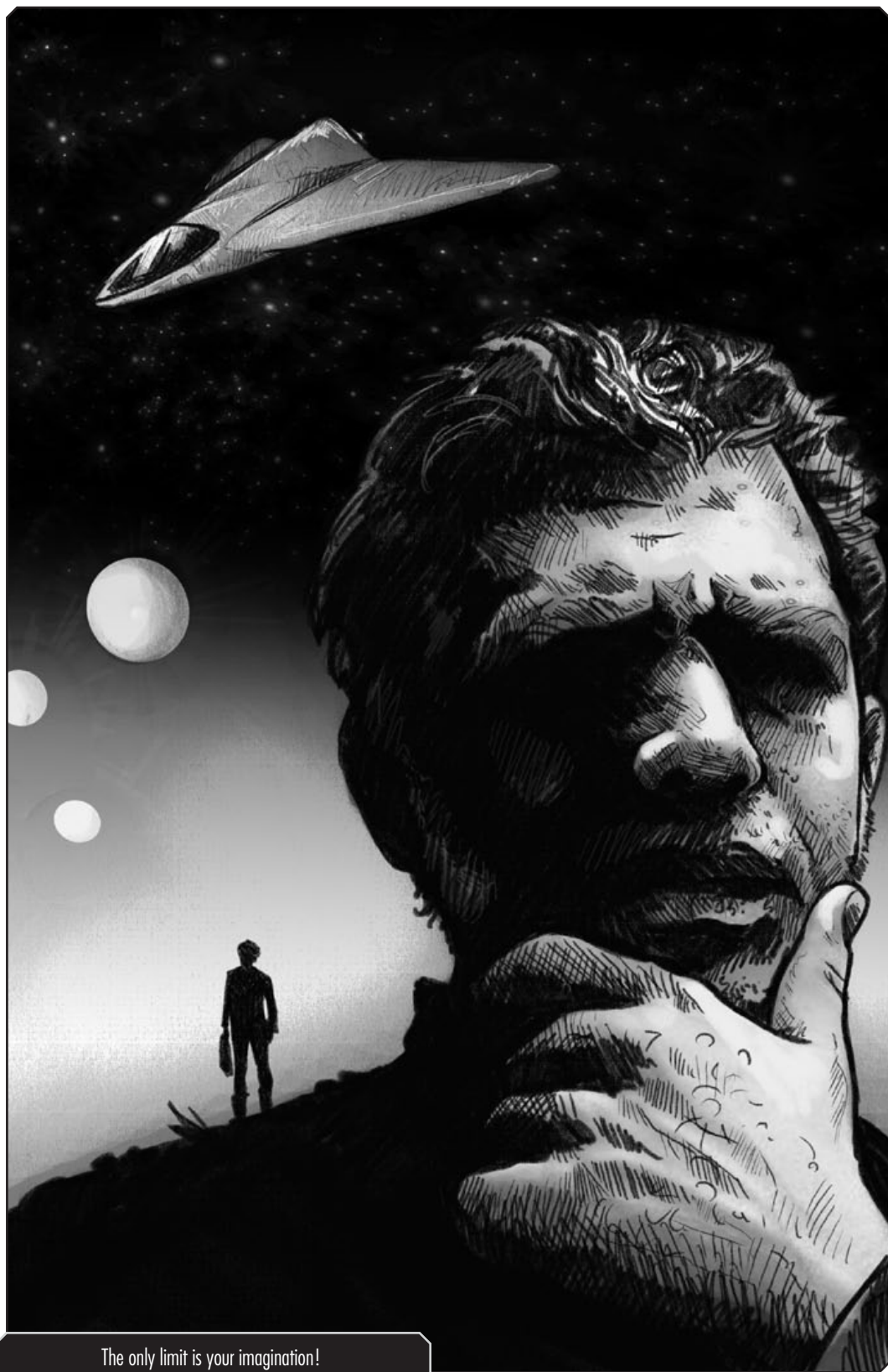
Hooks are roleplaying tools that describe some aspect of a character's past history, personality, or connections to other characters, among other things. For example, a character might have "AWOL from the Naval Infantry" or "Strong as a Megathere" as hooks. Each of these hooks is suggestive about a character and possibly about his relationship to the wider universe — both of which make them invaluable to the GM as he plans thrilling adventures among the Thousand Suns.

Besides suggesting interesting things about a character to the GM, hooks have another more immediate benefit: action points. Action points are a kind of game mechanical "currency" a character acquires by creating hooks. They can be traded for situational boons, such as bonuses to a target number, free re-rolls, and other benefits. Action points are finite in number, with characters allowed no more than 10 at any given time, though most have less. Action points can be regained by bringing hooks to bear in an adventure in ways the GM thinks makes the game more exciting and fun. More information about hooks can be found in **Chapter 2** (*Hooks and Action Points*, p. 17) and **Chapter 5** (*Hooks*, p. 83).

## SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE

As noted above, *THOUSAND SUNS* is intended as a simple, flexible roleplaying game of science fiction adventure in the imperial SF tradition. All the rules you need to play can be found in this book. Future releases for the game will expand upon some of them, but they all hold to this original intention, thereby ensuring that you never get bogged down in needless rules or details. As a game, *THOUSAND SUNS* requires rules, of course; but they are not its focus, and you should always feel free to alter or even drop any rules that get in the way of your having fun.

**This is *your* game now. Make of it as you will.**



The only limit is your imagination!

# CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER GENERATION

"If you are going to be what you wear, you should try more than one style before you settle. As an experiment, try on something strange and wild. What sweet whirling thoughts unsettle the mind? Think about them. Now, who are you?"

— Alexei Panshin, *Masque World* (1969)

# CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER GENERATION

A character is a window to the futuristic worlds of *THOUSAND SUNS*. This chapter outlines how to generate and detail a character. As an aid to new players, a step-by-step example of character generation accompanies the text.

## THE CHARACTER GENERATION PROCESS

The process of generating a *THOUSAND SUNS* character has several simple steps, each one of which is described in greater detail in this chapter and in Chapters 3 and 4. These steps are:

1. **Determine Ability Scores:** Divide 30 points between the character's five abilities.
2. **Select Species:** Choose the character's species. Spend the bonus points listed under the "Traits" section of the species on abilities and/or skills of one's choice.
3. **Select Homeworld Package:** Choose one homeworld package for the character.
4. **Select Career Package(s):** Choose three levels of career packages for the character.
5. **Create Hooks:** Decide on five hooks for the character, one based on his species, one based on his homeworld, and three based on your his career(s).
6. **Benefit Points:** Determine how many benefit points the character receives and spend them.
7. **Finishing Touches:** Give the character a name, age, and gender.

### spending points

Whenever points are available to spend on abilities and skills without specification, the points may be spent on a one-to-one basis when purchasing skills and a two-to-one basis when purchasing abilities. This is a universal rule throughout *THOUSAND SUNS*.

### option: random generation of ability scores

The GM may decide to dispense with ability points altogether, opting instead for the random generation of ability scores. If this is the case, each player rolls 1D12 in order for each ability and records the number on the die. Alternately, the character may arrange the results of the dice as he wishes, in order to give some degree of control over character generation.

Random generation of ability scores should, on average, produce characters roughly comparable to those generated through the expenditure of 30 ability points. Randomness being what it is, though, some characters might possess lower ability scores than average while others will possess higher ones. Likewise, random generation often produces unexpected results, which is either its main benefit or drawback depending on one's point of view. Consequently, the GM should discuss this option with his players before adopting it, to be sure that they are prepared for its potential oddities.



# ABILITIES

Five abilities define characters. Abilities range in numerical value from 1 to 12, with 6 being average for Terrans. A player has 30 ability points to divide amongst his character's abilities at the start of character generation. He must allocate at least 1 point in each score and may not allocate more than 12 in any of them. The selection of certain species, homeworld, and career packages may grant additional ability points above and beyond those initially allocated. In general, these scores are unlikely to change over the course of play, so take time to consider their allocation.

The five abilities possessed by all characters are: Body, Dexterity, Perception, Presence, and Will.

## BODY

Body measures the physical strength and bodily health of a character. This ability determines how much a character can lift, how far he can throw, how hard he can hit, and how resistant he is to poison, disease, radiation, and other deleterious effects.

### why body?

*THOUSAND SUNS* divides a character's mental/psychological characteristics into three abilities, but divides his physical characteristics into only two. Why? Firstly, it's a matter of simplicity. Secondly, while strength and health are not necessarily correlated, there is enough of a correlation to serve as a broad shorthand for any given character's physical characteristics. Finally, in science fiction, mental/psychological characteristics tend to be more important than physical ones and so the reduction of those characteristics to two rather than three scores seemed warranted. GMs or players who feel the need to divide Body into, say, Strength and Endurance are free to do so. Simply give starting characters 36 ability points rather than 30 and specify which Body-based skills are governed by which of the two new abilities. All other references to Body should be similarly associated with Strength or Endurance, as appropriate.

## DEXTERITY

Dexterity measures a character's agility and hand-eye coordination. Dexterity also determines the speed of a character's reactions. In combat, Dexterity partly determines when a character acts during a combat round.

## PERCEPTION

Perception measures a character's awareness of his surroundings, as well as his intuition, memory, and insight. Characters with high Perception tend to notice things that others do not, while those with low Perception frequently fail to take note of even very obvious details.

## PRESENCE

Presence measures a character's charisma and personableness. Characters with high Presence are often charismatic (or intimidating), dominating social situations, while those with low Presence tend not to be noticed and have difficulty interacting with others.

## WILL

Will measures both a character's determination and purposefulness. Characters with high Will scores are not easily dissuaded from a course of action once they have set their minds to it, while those with low Will scores buckle under when faced with adversity. Will also plays a role in the optional psi rules (see **Chapter 7**).

### why no intelligence?

Unlike many roleplaying games, *THOUSAND SUNS* includes no ability measuring a character's native intelligence. The reason for this is simple: the skill system already does this to a large degree. "Intelligence" is generally understood to measure a character's ability to piece together disparate bits of information to form a conclusion, sometimes logically and sometimes intuitively. In *THOUSAND SUNS*, that's exactly what Perception does, while skill ranks measure the extent of a character's specific knowledge of a given subject.

## VITALITY

Vitality is, in some ways, a sixth ability, representing how much physical punishment a character can take. Unlike other abilities, one determines Vitality's numerical value not by spending ability points, but by a simple calculation, namely  $[(\text{Body} + \text{Will}) \div 2] \times 5$  (drop all fractions when rounding). Thus, a character with 7 Body and 6 Will ( $7 + 6 = 13 \div 2 = 6$ ) has 30 Vitality.

Vitality is represented on the character sheet by a series of boxes. Every time a character takes damage of some type, check off the appropriate number of boxes. As more boxes are checked, a character suffers a variety of mounting damage penalties that make it more difficult for him to act. A character is either unconscious or dying if all the boxes are checked off in the course of combat. Further information on Vitality and how it relates to damage can be found in **Chapter 6** (*Damage*, p. 97).

## INITIATIVE RANK

Which character gets to act first in a round is partly determined by his Initiative Rank. The rank is determined by the following formula:

$$[(\text{Dexterity} + \text{Perception}) \div 2] = \text{Initiative Rank}$$

The use of this rank is discussed later in the book (see *Initiative*, p. 89).

### Creating a Character: Ability Scores

Rufus has 30 points to divide amongst his character's five scores on a one-for-one basis. He wants to play a somewhat cerebral character with a commanding personality. Consequently, he places more points into Perception, Presence, and Will than into Body and Dexterity. After some scribbling, Rufus arranges his allotment of 30 points thusly:

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 5 ■ Perception 8 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 5**

This means that Rufus' character will have the following abilities (dropping all fractions as his GM tells him to do!):

**Vitality 25  $[(5 + 5) \div 2] \times 5$  ■ Initiative Rank 6  $[(5 + 8) \div 2]$**

## SPECIES

All characters in *THOUSAND SUNS* have a species, which describes their biological makeup, as well as their social and cultural background. Sample species are detailed in **Chapter 3** and rules creating one's own species can be found in **Chapter 12**. Most species provide varying degrees of bonus points that can be used to increase abilities on a two-to-one basis or skills on a one-to-one basis.

### Creating a Character: Species

Rufus reads through the species descriptions starting on p. 22 of **Chapter 3**, and decides that he would like to play a Terran. He notes that Terran characters automatically gain Culture (Terran) 2 and Language (Lingua Terra) 2, in addition to 10 points with which to purchase skills and abilities. He can spend those points now or wait until later, as he wishes. In this case, he opts to wait until later, so that he can make decisions based on what skills and abilities his character might acquire in later steps.

### non-human homeworld packages

As presented, these homeworld packages presume the character is a native of a Terran-dominated interstellar state and the skill choices reflect that. If a character is not native to such a state, tweaks may be necessary to reflect the differences between non-Terran and Terran societies, up to and including the substitution of skills. As always, the Game Master is final arbiter of what substitutions are most appropriate for his campaign.

## HOMEWORLD PACKAGES

After having selected a species, one should choose one homeworld package for one's character. A homeworld package is a collection of skills and attribute bonuses that represent what a character learned or experienced as a result of growing up on a particular planet. homeworld packages are divided into five broad categories: Core, Civilized, the Marches, Spacer, and Wildspace. Some categories are further sub-divided to provide additional means to distinguish one world from another.

### CORE

The Core worlds are the most populous, sophisticated, and influential worlds in the *THOUSAND SUNS*. They also tend to possess very stratified societies, where wealth and family history count for more than talent or ingenuity. Consequently, characters from the Core worlds are more class-conscious than are their counterparts elsewhere in the galaxy and this reveals itself in the skills and abilities they favor.

This homeworld package is further subdivided into social classes: upper, middle, or lower.

### UPPER CLASS

Bureaucracy 1, Computers 0, Diplomacy 1, Intimidation 1, Socialize 2.



A panoramic view of an ecumenopolis in the Core Worlds.

## MIDDLE CLASS

Bureaucracy 1, Computers 0, Empathy 1, Observe 1, Vehicle Operation 2.

## LOWER CLASS

Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 1, Computers 0, Survival (City) 1, Streetwise 1.

***Suggested Hooks:*** Arranged Marriage, Black Sheep, Friend of the Family, Only the Best Will Do, Your Good Name

## CIVILIZED

The Civilized worlds are those either located astrographically outside the Core worlds or those whose populations or galactic influence are simply less than those of the Core. Nevertheless, as their name suggestions, the Civilized worlds are technologically and socially advanced and their inhabitants contribute much to the Thousand Suns. In many ways, they are the foundation upon which interstellar governance rests. Characters from these worlds are therefore the standard by which those from other Homeworlds are judged.

Computers 1, Vehicle Operation 2, any two skills at rank 1.

***Suggested Hooks:*** Face in the Crowd, I'll Show Them, People Person, See the Galaxy, Working Stiff

## THE MARCHES

The frontiers of the Thousand Suns are known colloquially as the Marches. The worlds of the Marches are a diverse lot, but all share a number of characteristics, the most important of which is their distance from any central authority. Characters from the Marches thus tend to be independent-minded and resourceful compared to those from Civilized and (especially) Core worlds. Choose either one of the following to represent growing up on either a high or low population world in the Marches.

### HIGH POPULATION

Computers 1, Empathy 1, Survival 0, Technical Sciences 1, and either two non-native Languages at rank 1 each or one non-native language at rank 2.

### LOW POPULATION

Athletics 1, Melee, Shoot, or Unarmed Combat 1, Survival 1, Technical Sciences 0, and either two different non-native languages at rank 1 each or one non-native language at rank 2.

***Suggested Hooks:*** Always Prepared, Loner, Rough and Tumble, Stupid Core Worlders, The Ways of the Wild

## SPACER

The Spacer homeworld package is probably the most unusual of the five presented here, as it describes characters whose "homeworld" is a starship, space station, or other similar location. Spacers were literally born and grew up in a space-based environment, making them most at home when feeling the pull of artificial gravity and breathing recycled air. Many spacers are natural pilots or intuitively understand the workings of space vessels, traits that make them much in demand among the Thousand Suns.

Acrobatics (Zero-G) 1, Observe 1, Technical Sciences 1, and one skill at rank 1 from among Piloting or Space Sciences.

***Suggested Hooks:*** Agoraphobic, Blowout, Have Spacesuit, Will Travel, Mysophobe, Tunnel Rat

## WILDSPACE

The regions outside the Thousand Suns are collectively called Wildspace and their inhabitants are typically deemed barbarians, especially by residents of the Core and Civilized worlds. The reality is far more complex, with some Wildspace planets being technologically advanced, particularly those whose native species are not Terran. What does differentiate Wildspace from the rest of the galaxy is its cultural isolation. Wildspace was never integrated into the wider interstellar culture and characters hailing from this region, whether human or alien, are outsiders and viewed with some suspicion by many inhabitants of the Thousand Suns.

### LOW-TECH WORLD

Animal Handling 0, Athletics 1, Melee, Shoot, or Unarmed Combat 1, Observe 1, Survival 2.

### HIGH-TECH WORLD

Computers 1, Technical Sciences 1, Vehicle Operation 1, any two different skills at rank 1 each.

**Suggested Hooks:** Civilization is for the Weak, Only the Strong Survive, The Stranger, Who's the Barbarian? Wily

#### random generation of homeworld package

The GM may require that homeworld packages be generated randomly. Alternately, a player may have no strong preference about his character's homeworld package and trust the luck of the dice to determine it for him. In such cases, use the following table:

| Roll (2D12) | Result                        |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 2–3         | Core (Upper Class)            |
| 4–7         | Core (Middle Class)           |
| 8–10        | Core (Lower Class)            |
| 11–14       | Civilized                     |
| 15–17       | The Marches (High Population) |
| 18–20       | The Marches (Low Population)  |
| 21–22       | Spacer                        |
| 23          | Wildspace (High Tech)         |
| 24          | Wildspace (Low Tech)          |

#### Creating a Character: Homeworld Package

Rufus has no strong opinion about his character's homeworld, so he opts to use the optional random table. He rolls 19 on 2D12, meaning that his character is from a low population world in the Marches. Characters from such worlds gain a number of skills and abilities: Athletics 1, Survival 2, and Technical Sciences 0. He must also choose from Melee, Shoot, or Unarmed Combat at rank 1; he selects Unarmed Combat. His character also gets either two non-native languages at rank 1 each or a single non-native language at rank 2; he opts for the former and chooses the Czanik language of Arcza and the Hen Jaa language of Ja Haa Len.



## CAREER PACKAGES

After having selected a homeworld package, one may choose up to three career packages for a character. As its name suggests, a career package is a collection of skills and ability bonuses that represent training and experiences acquired by the character while “on the job” before the start of play. Career packages are detailed in **Chapter 4**, starting on p. 56.

### Creating a Character: Career Package

Rufus must now select his character’s career packages, and decides that he wants to play a military doctor. He determines that the Navy would be the best option for his less physically adept character. This means taking two different career packages, one at Novice and one at Experienced. Since the player is more interested in being a doctor than a military officer, he takes the career package Doctor at the Experienced level and the career package Navy at Novice, noting the skills and abilities granted by each in Chapter 4.

The Experienced level of Doctor is fairly straightforward, providing the character primarily with ranks in skills he did not already possess, as well +2 to Perception. He does gain Technical Sciences 4, which simply supersedes his existing rank of 0 in that skill. The character also receives 3 ranks in Medical Sciences or specializations thereof. He decides to use 1 rank to raise his general Medical Sciences skill to 6 and the other 2 ranks to purchase specializations (one in First Aid and one in Surgery). The Novice level of Navy grants Bureaucracy (Military) 1. Since this is below the character’s current, un-specialized rank in that skill, he simply adds the 1 rank it grants, increasing his skill to 3 and has no specialization in it. He also gains Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1. Since he already possesses that skill and specialization, he simply increases his overall Medical Sciences skill to rank 7. The character can acquire rank 1 from one of several skills. His player chooses Piloting and Space Sciences. None of the other skills granted by this package pose any difficulties and can simply be added to his existing ones.

At this point, the player decides to spend the 10 additional points he gained because his character is a Terran. Looking over the skills acquired thus far, he decides to increase his character’s Defend from rank 1 to 3, as well as his Dodge from 2 to 4, since these suit his desire to play a character who shies away from violence when possible. He increases his character’s Empathy from 4 to 6 and his Investigation from 3 to 6. That leaves him with a single remaining point that he adds to the Observe skill, bringing its rank to 5.

## HOOKS

Characters begin the game with five hooks: one for his species, one for his homeworld, and three for his career(s). Hooks are noteworthy qualities, people, events, locations, or even objects that both link your character to them and describe him more fully. For example, a Terran from an ecumenopolis (or city-world) might choose “Nosy” as his species hook (playing off the fact that Terrans are renowned for their curiosity) and “Strato Gang Member” for his homeworld hook (indicating that, as a kid, he was a street tough on the Strato, the dark, crime-ridden surface of the planet). These hooks help describe the character and flesh out his personality, history, and other elements that both the player and the GM alike can use as inspirations for adventures.

Suggestions for hooks are included throughout the rulebook, typically after the descriptions of species and homeworld packages. Of course, players are encouraged to create their own hooks. In addition, at the discretion of the GM, one or more hooks may be left unsigned during character generation, to be added later during play.

Hooks have another purpose beyond roleplaying: they allow a character to gain and spend action points (see below). Hooks provide a character with a justification for using action points at an appropriate time in an adventure. Conversely, if a player can connect one or more of his character's hooks into the current adventure in a way that makes the character's life more difficult (which is to say, *more exciting*), he *gains* an action point. Likewise, the Game Master may at certain times decide that one or more of a character's hooks is relevant and introduce new obstacles to his progress because of this, in which case he also gains action points.

Hooks should be noted on your character sheet in the section entitled "Action Points."

### career hooks

A player can spend his career hooks any way that he wishes, but, as a general rule, it's best to think of each of the three hooks as being associated with one level of his character career(s). For example, a Veteran Marine typically has one hook associated with his Novice years, one with his Experienced years, and one with his Veteran years. Each hook represents something noteworthy about each phase of his time in the Naval Infantry. This pattern holds true even for characters with multiple careers, such as someone who is an Experienced Scout and a Novice Trader. In this case, the character likely has two hooks associated with his years as a Scout and only one for his years as a Trader.

### Creating a Character: Hooks

A starting character has five hooks: one for his species, one for his homeworld, and three based on his career packages. Rufus decides on "Inquisitive" for his species, "Self-Reliant" for his homeworld, and "Sublieutenant," "Bedside Manner," and "Steady Hands" for his career packages.

## ACTION POINTS

Every newly created character starts with five **action points**. Action points are a meta-game element that allows the player (rather than the character) to influence events in the game in small but interesting ways. They are refreshed at the start of each new session of play, regardless of how many the character possesses. Action points can be used in one of three ways.

### +1 BONUS

The simplest use of an action point is to grant a +1 bonus to the target of any dice roll.

### HOOKS

If a character has a hook that his player feels is applicable to the character's current situation, he may mention this to the GM and, if he agrees, he may then spend an action point to do one of the following:

- +2 bonus to *any* target
- Re-roll *any* failed test

A player may use as many hooks as he wishes to any single action, provided the GM agrees that they apply to the situation *and* he has sufficient action points to do so (each hook requires an action point to “activate” it). A player may not, however, use the same hook multiple times to spend multiple action points on the same action.

## RANKS AS HOOKS

Certain career packages, primarily military ones, have ranks associated with them. These ranks (not to be confused with skill ranks) are listed after the appropriate level of the package. These ranks indicate the typical level of professional recognition a character at that stage in his career is likely to possess. Thus, an Experienced Aristocrat, in a setting that features titled nobility, is probably a Baron or a Marquis. In the case of military career packages, the listed ranks have one of the following notations before them: “E” or “O.” These indicate enlisted and officer ranks respectively.

Ranks are a type of hook. If a character has one or more career packages with ranks associated with them, one should generally use one of the character’s three career-related hooks to acquire a rank. The player is completely free to choose whatever rank you wish from among those listed at the appropriate stage of a character’s chosen career packages. The choice is, of course, subject to Game Master approval and there should be some leeway given to allow for certain types of character concepts, such as very experienced soldiers constantly passed over for promotion or individuals with friends in high places who have advanced their careers well beyond their level of competence. The listed ranks are good guidelines, though, so that if the GM wishes to create the Captain of a Naval vessel, chances are he is at the Veteran stage of his career.

Use ranks like any other hook. For example, if a character is a former Naval Infantry Master Gunner, use this hook to give him an easier time interacting with Marine troopers on a garrison in the Marches. Likewise, if a character is a noble, he will probably be able to use his title to wrangle an audience with an imperial satrap who might otherwise deny it to a commoner. Ranks can thus be very useful hooks and should not be overlooked.

## BENEFIT POINTS

All characters gain a number of benefit points with which to acquire things that would be of use to them in the course of a campaign, such as assets, retainers, or even a starship. Characters gain a number of benefit points based on the level of the career packages they chose. Benefit points are accrued as follows:

**TABLE 2–1: Benefit Points**

| Career Level | Benefit Points |
|--------------|----------------|
| Novice       | 1              |
| Experienced  | 4              |
| Veteran      | 5              |

Benefit points are cumulative, so a Veteran of a single career starts with 10 benefit points, whereas a character who is Experienced in one career and a Novice in another starts with only 5 benefit points. Players may, if they choose, pool their points to acquire more impressive starting benefits.



A few possible uses of benefit points are provided here, but the GM is encouraged to create others, as appropriate to his campaign. Likewise, future supplements to *THOUSAND SUNS* may introduce additional ways to use benefit points.

## ASSETS (VARIABLE)

Most characters need possessions and equipment, which require money to acquire. A character's starting funds depend on how many benefit points his player is willing to expend. Each benefit point spent equals 10,000\$, so 3 benefit points spent on assets gives the character 30,000\$ at the start of play.

Players may also purchase a pension or other source of regular income for their characters. This income is available on a monthly basis and equals one-tenth the amount of starting funds available to the benefit points expended. For example, if a player spends only 1 benefit point for a pension/income, the character receives 1000\$ per month, whereas if he spends 3 benefit points, the character receives 3000\$ per month.

## MEMBERSHIP (1–3 BENEFIT POINTS)

A character possesses membership in an organization of some sort, with the cost varying according to the scope of the organization in question.

**TABLE 2–2: Membership**

| Organization Scope | Benefit Points |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Planetary          | 1              |
| Sector-Wide        | 2              |
| Intersector        | 3              |

As a general rule, only organizations that grant tangible benefits to their members, such as access to special information, equipment, or jumplines, require the expenditure of benefit points. Membership in other organizations can be handled either as hooks (if still noteworthy) or merely as background.

## RETAINER (1–3 BENEFIT POINTS)

A character employs a servant (or robot) who possesses skills of use to him. The cost of the retainer varies with the skills of the retainer. If so desired, multiple retainers can be acquired with benefit points, but the costs below are per retainer.

**TABLE 2–3: Retainer**

| Retainer Scope       | Benefit Points |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Novice Retainer      | 1              |
| Experienced Retainer | 2              |
| Veteran Retainer     | 3              |

The expense of employing a retainer is covered by the benefit points spent to acquire one. Retainers are generally Experienced NPCs under the control of the GM. Though loyal to their employers, they nevertheless seek to preserve their own lives in dangerous situations.

## STARSHIP MORTGAGE SHARE (VARIABLE)

The character is partial owner of a starship mortgaged from a bank or other institution. Each benefit point a character expends represents 2.5 % of the starship's total cost, the remainder being owed to a lender. Theoretically, any type of starship can be purchased using starship mortgage shares, but it is recommended that the GM restrict the characters to relatively small, non-military vessels (see *Sample Starships*, p. 168, for more details).

Starship mortgage shares are *not* convertible to cash. They represent funds already spent toward paying off the debt a character has taken on in acquiring a starship.

### Creating a Character: Benefit Points

Because the character has one Novice and one Experienced career package, he has accrued 5 benefit points. Rufus decides to spend 1 point in Assets to give himself 10,000\$ with which to buy equipment and another point in Assets to give himself a small pension of 1,000\$ per month. He uses the remaining 3 points to give the character membership in an intersector organization — the Encyclopedia Galactica Foundation.

## FINISHING TOUCHES

After having a species, homeworld and career packages, and hooks, a character is almost complete. He still needs, at minimum, a name, an age, and a gender. It might be a good idea to have at least a basic background too, since this gives a better sense of how to portray him in adventures and can provide ideas for the Game Master to use in creating compelling scenarios. Of course, there is neither an expectation nor a requirement that one create a background for one's character. Indeed, some players might find it easier to add details to their character's background over time and through play.

### NAME

A character's name is important, since it's something that (likely) sticks with him throughout his many adventures, even as he learns new skills, takes up new jobs, and acquires new equipment. There are lots of schools of thought regarding the "proper" way to name a character in a roleplaying game. Truth be told, there is no right or wrong way to name a character. Provided the player likes the name and it suits the type and style of campaign the GM is running, almost any name is acceptable.

It's worth noting, though, that the science fiction that inspiring *THOUSAND SUNS* had naming conventions you might wish to consider. By and large, Imperial Science Fiction assumes the future belongs to a multi-ethnic, multicultural, polyglot society in which names would be as convoluted as physical appearance. If you go this route, mix and match freely between cultures. Names like Themistocles M'Benga, Hideki Keogh, or Arturo Dillingham are all perfect examples of the kinds of names you might find in Imperial SF fiction stories. Another possibility is the slight alteration of contemporary names, like Daneel instead of Daniel or Andray instead of Andrew. Of course, alien characters have their own unique naming conventions.



## AGE

A character's age is also important. Even in the far future, when lifespans are longer than in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people still likely equate youth with inexperience and old age with wisdom. Consequently, think carefully about how to portray a character and how others might view him. Is he a hotshot pilot still wet behind the ears and aching to prove his worth? Or is he a hard-bitten explorer who's been from one end of the galaxy to the other and seen it all?

There is no game mechanical benefit or penalty to being either young or old, but there are roleplaying consequences to the choice. Always bear in mind the character's career packages. A character who is a Veteran of a single career is more likely to be older than someone who's a Novice in three. There's no direct correlation, of course. After all, a wunderkind scientist could easily be considered a Veteran in his chosen profession, even if he is still quite young. Likewise, an aged dilettante might never have mastered a single career, instead having Novice level in three different ones.

## GENDER

A character's gender matters less than his name or even age, but it is still important. *THOUSAND SUNS* assumes that, in the future, there is little to no discrimination based on gender in Terran society. It is just as likely that the Grand Admiral of the Marches is a woman as a man, for example. That said, human beings being what they are, men and women relate to one another differently and there is little reason to assume a lack of societal discrimination necessarily eliminates the recognition of gender differences. Male or female characters may encounter certain benefits or hindrances that they would not if they were the opposite gender. Naturally, aliens are another matter entirely.

It's up to each Game Master to decide for his game whether the choice of gender has any consequences. In some settings, for instance, only women might be allowed to become starfighter pilots, while only men serve as ground troops. In others, men and women serve side by side without comment. The default assumption throughout this rulebook is that gender differences are insignificant. It is not the only assumption and not necessarily the best, but it is the simplest one, which is why this rulebook employs it.

### Creating a Character: Finishing Touches

All that remains is for Rufus to come up with a name, age, and gender for his character. He decides that the character is male and in his mid-thirties. For a name, he chooses Ludoviko Janssens, feeling that it suits the multicultural character of the *THOUSAND SUNS* meta-setting.

### Creating a Character: Completed Character

Sublieutenant Ludoviko Janssens, M.D.

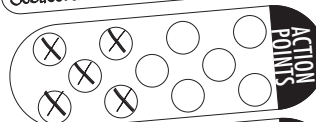
Body 5 ■ Dexterity 5 ■ Perception 10 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 5 ■ Vitality 25

Acrobatic (Zero-G) 1, Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 3, Computers 6, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 3, Diplomacy 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 6, Investigation 6, Language (Arecza) 1, Language (Ja Haa Len) 1, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Life Sciences (Biology) 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid, Surgery) 7, Melee 1, Observe 5, Piloting 1, Profession (Doctor) 4, Profession (Navy) 2, Shoot 1, Socialize 4, Space Sciences 1, Survival 2, Tactics 2, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 3

# EXAMPLE CHARACTER SHEET

## THOUSAND SUNS CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER  
Sublieutenant Ludoviko Janssens, M.D.



ACTION  
POINTS

Hooks  
Inquisitive Self-Reliant  
Sublieutenant Bedside Manner  
Steady Hands

BODY

5

DEXTERITY

5

PERCEPTION

10

PRESENCE

7

WILL

5

INITIATIVE RANK

7

((Dexterity + Perception) ÷ 2)

VITALITY

((Body + Will) ÷ 2) x 5

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EQUIPMENT

Ludoviko has 10,000\$ in easily liquid assets,  
and a small pension of 1,000\$ per month.

WEAPON

DV RANGE SIZE ROF

SKILLS & PSI POWERS

RANK ABL TN UNTRAINED

|                                       |   |      |    |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|----|---|
| Acrobatics (Terat)                    | 1 | DEX  | 6  |   |
| Animal Handling                       |   | PRES |    |   |
| Athletics                             | 4 | BODY | 9  | x |
| Bargain                               |   | PRES |    | x |
| Bureaucracy                           | 3 | PERC | 13 | x |
| Computers                             | 6 | PERC | 16 | x |
| Culture (t) (Terran)                  | 2 | PERC | 12 |   |
| Defend                                | 3 | DEX  | 8  | x |
| Diplomacy                             | 4 | PRES | 11 | x |
| Dodge                                 | 4 | DEX  | 9  | x |
| Empathy                               | 6 | PERC | 16 | x |
| Engineering                           |   | PERC |    |   |
| Gaming                                |   | PERC |    | x |
| Gunnery                               |   | DEX  |    |   |
| Heavy Weapons                         |   | DEX  |    | x |
| Intrusion                             |   | PRES |    | x |
| Intimidation                          | 6 | PERC | 16 | x |
| Investigation                         | 1 | PERC | 11 |   |
| Language (t) (Arecia)                 | 1 | PERC | 11 |   |
| Language (t) (Ja Haa Len)             | 4 | PERC | 14 |   |
| Life Sciences (Biology)               | 7 | PERC | 17 |   |
| Medical Sciences (First Aid, Surgery) | 1 | DEX  | 6  | x |
| Melee                                 | 5 | PERC | 10 | x |
| Observe                               |   | PRES |    | x |
| Performance                           |   | PERC |    |   |
| Physical Sciences                     | 1 | DEX  | 6  |   |
| Piloting                              | 4 | PERC | 14 |   |
| Profession (t) (Doctor)               | 2 | PERC | 12 |   |
| Profession (t) (Navy)                 |   | WILL |    | x |
| Resist                                |   | DEX  |    | x |
| Shoot                                 | 1 | PRES | 8  | x |
| Socialize                             | 4 | PERC | 14 |   |
| Social Sciences                       |   | PERC |    |   |
| Space Sciences                        | 1 | DEX  | 6  | x |
| Stealth                               |   | PRES |    | x |
| Streetwise                            |   | PERC |    |   |
| Subterfuge                            |   | PERC |    |   |
| Survival                              | 2 | PERC | 10 |   |
| Tactics                               | 2 | PERC | 13 |   |
| Technical Sciences                    | 6 | DEX  | 11 | x |
| Unarmed Combat                        |   | DEX  |    | x |
| Vehicle Operation                     | 2 | PERC | 10 |   |
| Language (Lingua Terra)               |   |      |    |   |

Rufus is going to select Ludoviko's equipment and weapons after talking with the rest of the gaming group, to make sure that the characters have all the gear they need to fit their needs.

# THOUSAND SUNS BACKGROUND SHEET

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>CHARACTER</b><br>Sublieutenant Ludoviko Janssens, M.D. | <b>HOMEWORLD</b><br>The Marches (low pop) |
| <b>GENDER</b><br>Male                                     | <b>SPECIES</b><br>Terran                  |
| <b>CAREERS</b><br>Doctor (exp), Navy (novice)             | <b>AGE</b><br>34                          |
| <b>XP EARNED</b>  | <b>XP SPENT</b>                           |

## DESCRIPTION

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## MORE SKILLS & PSI

RANK ABL TN UNTRAINED

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## HISTORY

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## SPACESHIPS AND VEHICLES

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## NOTES

A lot of Ludoviko's past is as mysterious as his present. Rufus and his game master intend to fill out his background only as necessary, when it comes up during game-play or in character discussions.

He fills the second page of the character sheet out, but probably won't need to refer to it until after the first few game sessions — when he has some info to add to it!



A genetically "superior" Myrmidon couple.

# CHAPTER 3: SPECIES

Louis knew a few xenophobes, and regarded them as dolts.

— Larry Niven, *Ringworld* (1970)

# CHAPTER 3: SPECIES

Imperial science fiction generally assumes that the universe is teeming with life, with many worlds boasting native sapient species that have left the cradles of their homeworlds to seek their destinies among the stars. The species described in this chapter are merely a small selection of the possible species you might have in your own campaign. Each includes a brief overview of their physiologies, psychologies, histories, and cultures, along with abilities (if any) and some suggested hooks for characters who belong to these species.

Game Masters should feel free to use any, all, or none of these species presented here, in addition to changing any of their details to suit the nature of the campaign setting. Rules for creating sapient species for use as characters are found in **Chapter 12** (starting on p. 216) and both players and GMs alike are encouraged to use those rules to create their own species should the samples presented here fail to be of interest to them. The same chapter also includes descriptions of the various abilities listed under “Traits” in the entries below.

## TERRAN

Terrans are humans descended from those who left Terra after the discovery of the D-Drive. Politically and technologically, they are the most important sapient species in the Thousand Suns — although the Hen Jaa (p. 48) would undoubtedly disagree with that assessment.

### PHYSIOLOGY

Terrans are warm-blooded, omnivorous mammals standing 1.75 m and weighing 70 kg on average. They possess two arms and two legs and a single head with two eyes, an external nose, and a mouth. Their hands have five fingers, including an opposable thumb, while their feet have five toes. Terrans possess an internal skeleton covered by skin, whose coloration varies greatly, from a pale, pinkish-white to nearly-black and everything in between, although darker shades are more common. Terran heads are covered by hair, which shows as much variation in hue as skin. Being mammals, Terrans also possess body hair whose extent likewise varies from individual to individual.

Terrans have color vision and can see in the spectrum between infrared and ultraviolet. Their eyes also grant them good motion and depth perception. Terran ears can hear sounds with frequencies between 20 Hz and 20 kHz. Terran skin is very tactile in nature and responds well to such sensations. Terrans also possess the senses of taste and smell but neither is as highly developed as the other three senses.

Terran internal body temperature is 37° C. As a species, Terrans are divided into two genders, male and female, and bear live young, usually a single child (although twins are not uncommon) after a nine-month gestation period. The average Terran, with a good diet and regular medical attention, can expect to live between 100 and 120 standard years, with lifespans as long as 150 years not wholly unknown.

### PSYCHOLOGY

Terrans, as a species, are intensely curious, often to the point of self-destruction. Terrans often seek out new information and new experiences simply for the pleasure of doing so, although they are also quite clever in finding ways to make use of what they discover for other ends. Sometimes this leads to recklessness and a lack of interest in the long-term consequences of



their actions. More than once throughout their own history, Terrans have followed their insatiable curiosity one — or more — steps too far and nearly brought disaster upon their species.

Fortunately, Terrans are also quite innovative. An outgrowth of their curiosity, Terrans are natural tinkerers, finding enjoyment in solving puzzles and developing new ways to approach old problems. Unsurprisingly, Terrans have always been fascinated by technology and treat the invention, sale, and acquisition of new gadgets as pastimes.

Finally, Terrans are, in equal measures, xenophilic and xenophobic. This is difficult for other species to understand and has caused numerous problems throughout interstellar history. The curious Terrans always seek out the new and unusual and few things are more new and unusual than other cultures and species. Yet, Terrans also recognize that, while the grass may indeed appear greener elsewhere, this is not always the case. When a threat is perceived, Terrans are quick to rally around the tried and true, an atavistic attachment for tradition that lies at the core of their otherwise open-minded and curious psychology.

## HISTORY

Terran history extends back several thousands of years to their homeworld of Terra. After millennia of strife and warfare, the species managed to survive to discover the D-Drive and the gateway to the stars. Since then, Terrans have expanded outward into the galaxy, rarely looking back at their world of origin. Many Terrans feel that it is only since star travel that their species has truly “grown up” and achieved its fullest potential. While other species might question this assertion, particularly given the Terran proclivity for stirring up trouble, few can deny that the history of the species since traveling to the stars has been an impressive one. For good and for ill, the Terrans are one of the preeminent species of the Thousand Suns and that is unlikely to change anytime soon.

## SOCIETY

Terran society centers around the family unit, composed of elders, young, and those related to them by blood and other bonds. Families in turn form larger social units, which in turn form larger ones still. Terran society is marked by great trust between those with whom one has formed a social bond, whether it be through religion, custom, or law. Outside of those bonds, Terran society can be quite close-minded and discriminatory, sometimes to the point of violence.

At the same time, Terran society is very adaptable and has shown a remarkable willingness to make changes when circumstances demand them. Among starfaring Terrans, this has led to a wide variety of social arrangements, the diversity of which is dizzying to many other species — and to some Terrans as well. Although one would never use the term “logical” to describe Terran society, there is nevertheless a thoroughgoing consistency to it, wherein ideals are, over time, applied ruthlessly to every facet of society. What this means is that, while Terran society is no more or less just than any other society, it is nevertheless much more open to recognizing its faults and correcting them in light of foundational principles, even if this process can sometimes take generations or more.

Though Terrans laud bonds of blood and custom, they also allow a place for loners and malcontents, rebels who buck the trends of their society to find their own way in the galaxy. Such individuals are not always revered or respected in their lifetimes (if ever), but there is still a tacit acknowledgement that not every Terran fits in with the prevailing society and it is his right to choose a destiny of his own making, provided that this destiny does not cause undue disruption to the society at large.

## TRAITS

All Terran characters acquire the skills Culture (Terran) 2 and Language (Lingua Terra) 2 for free. They also gain 10 additional points with which to purchase abilities and skills.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

Adaptable, History Buff, Rolling Stone, The Galaxy's My Oyster, Traditionalist

# HUMAN CLADES

"Clade" is the term used to describe genetically engineered sub-species of humanity created. Originally created for specific purposes, several clades have not only survived but prospered, forming their own unique societies and cultures among the Thousand Suns. The Myrmidon and The Delphic are the most prominent, and are described below but there are many more not described here.

## MYRMIDON

The Myrmidon clade was created to augment the military forces of the Old Federation. Myrmidons were intended to be "super soldiers" with superior strength, endurance, and reflexes, as well as an intuitive understanding of strategy and tactics. In the final days of the Federation, many Myrmidon units took the opportunity to rebel, seizing power on several worlds and setting themselves up as rulers over "lesser" breeds, both human and alien.

## PHYSIOLOGY

Myrmidons are physically perfect human specimens, looking very much like their Terran ancestors. Except for the fact that they are supremely fit, strong, and highly resistant to disease, they differ physiologically from Terrans in only the most minor ways. Because human physiognomy is sub-optimal in design in certain respects, there were limits to how much greatly the baseline human genome could be changed in creating this clade. Thus, while it is medically possible to determine if an individual is a Myrmidon or an unaugmented Terran, it is not always possible to determine this simply by sight alone. Contrary to popular belief, not all Myrmidons are paragons of physical beauty, although all are well-proportioned and muscular.

Myrmidons are also highly intelligent and cunning — with ambition to match. Not all Myrmidons are geniuses, but all possess above average intelligence by Terran standards. In principle, Myrmidons have a lifespan exceeding the 120 years common among Terrans, but the violent and treacherous nature of their society prevents all but the most ruthless from reaching such advanced ages.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Myrmidons differ from ordinary Terrans psychologically far more than physiologically. As noted above, they possess an intuitive understanding of strategy and tactics. Consequently, they view almost any situation, whether it be a battle, a commercial transaction, or even a social meeting in these terms, looking for ways to turn the situation to their advantage. They may not always act in accordance with their own advantage but they certainly are aware of it — just in case.

This in turn contributes to their well-deserved reputation for cunning and treachery. Even if Myrmidons are just as capable of selflessness as any other human being, it is rare to find one who acts primarily in the best interests of anyone but himself. This means that even seemingly altruistic actions are almost certain to give at least as much benefit (if not more) to the Myrmidon as to the person whom he has aided. At the same time, Myrmidons are psychologically predisposed to respect those in authority over them, whom they obey so long as the authority figure shows no signs of weakness or offers any openings for the Myrmidon to gain advantage. Displays of dominance are a natural outgrowth of this and most Myrmidons go to great lengths not only to show their strength (which is not limited to physical strength), but also to avoid even minor errors that could cause a loss of face and thus invite insubordination among their underlings.

To ordinary Terrans, Myrmidons thus appear annoyingly meticulous and fastidious. They take great pride in remembering even the minutest details about people and events as well as acting in accordance with established codes and regulations. Although inclined to dismiss other species and clades as inferior to themselves, they nevertheless accord grudging respect to anyone who shows a similar concern for detail, which they see as equal in importance to their genetically superior physical attributes.

## HISTORY

A Terran corporation created the first Myrmidons in the waning days of the Old Federation at the behest of the government, which had begun to question both the competence and loyalty of its soldiers. Code named for the soldiers of the ancient Greek hero Achilles, who were noted for their devotion to their commander, the Myrmidons proved every bit as capable as hoped, winning several major victories against rebel factions and handily defeating even the most talented Terran units under brutal odds. Previous “super soldier” projects had failed because the engineered troopers were too compliant and thus lacked the drive to be good warriors. Initially, the “willfulness” of the Myrmidons was praised, as it clearly contributed to their battle prowess. Within a few years, though, it became increasingly obvious that most Myrmidons were no longer content to prop up the tottering Federation and took the opportunity to become rulers in their own right, which hastened its fall. In the centuries since, Myrmidon states have been established on numerous worlds and several petty empires are ruled by Myrmidon elites. Myrmidons also inhabit states ruled by other species, such as Terrans, where they are often viewed with some suspicion stemming from their history.

## SOCIETY

Myrmidon society reflects their psychology and history, as does their Terran ancestry. For Myrmidons, genetic lineage is extremely important, who trace their lines of descent with great accuracy and often make alliances or conduct feuds on the basis of proximity to one’s own genetic lineage. Myrmidons still seek advantage even over their own kin, of course. However, they are much less likely to take extreme advantage over those with whom they share a common ancestry.

Unlike the Terrans, though, the family is not the base societal unit. From a young age, Myrmidons, both male and female, are trained to fight as part of what is called a *duon-roto*. These teams live and learn together in military academies and, ideally, stay together their whole lives, creating at once an extended family and fighting force. *Duonrotoj* are sex-segregated, like the Myrmidon military, but there is otherwise no difference in the

training between male and female. Myrmidons females are expected to be every bit as strong, cunning, and skilled as their male counterparts.

Some have compared Myrmidon society to that of pack hunters, like wolves, and there is some truth to the comparison. Leaders maintain their positions both by displays of strength and by rewarding those who support them. Any signs of “weakness” — a vague concept many a Myrmidon has used to slake his personal ambition — are ruthlessly exploited. Myrmidon politics, including within the military, often appears to be barely controlled chaos, as power relationships shift on a regular basis. Almost any means to gain or maintain power is deemed acceptable, provided that it is successful and provides a measure of stability afterwards. Assassination of one’s superior is thus not condemned absolutely, but if the assassination has negative consequences that undermine overall effectiveness, it is viewed negatively. Many a would-be “liberator” has found himself hoist by his own petard, once it became apparent that his actions were more detrimental to society than the “tyrant” whom he eliminated.

## TRAITS

All Myrmidon characters acquire the skills Culture (Myrmidon) 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Language (Batalo) 2, Melee 0, and Unarmed Combat 0 for free. (Batalo is the Myrmidon “battle language” used to relay tactical information quickly in combat) Myrmidons also gain Body +1, Tactics 1, Ultra Immune System, and Will +1, and 4 bonus points with which to purchase abilities and skills.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

It’s in the Blood, No Pity, Plans within Plans, The Ends Justify the Means, Watch Your Back

## THE DELPHIC

The Delphic clade was created as an experiment in heightened human intelligence and perception. Delphics thus demonstrate remarkable critical thinking skills, memories, and the ability to learn quickly. Many also demonstrate psi abilities far in advance of Terrans and other clades.

## PHYSIOLOGY

The Delphic are nearly physically identical to Terran humans. The primary difference is a much higher incidence of red hair, owing to an unintended side effect of the original genetic engineering that created the clade. Approximately 80% of all Delphics are redheaded, while the remainder exhibits the normal range of human hair coloration. Equally aberrant is the large percentage of left-handed Delphics (approximately 40% of the clade). The only other significant differences are internal, which can only be recognized under medical examination. These include a brain with a slightly larger corpus callosum and a more efficient cardiopulmonary system. Like Terran humans, the Delphic have an expected lifespan of between 100 and 120 years, with some extremely long-lived members of the clade reaching upwards of 150 years old.

## PSYCHOLOGY

The Delphic possess brains with vastly more axons bridging the gap between their two hemispheres. Delphics were intended by their creators to be more intuitive, insightful, and creative than either baseline Terrans or the artificial intelligences they often replaced. This point of view was inculcated in the Delphic as well. Leading many of the first generations of the clade to see themselves as “superior” to Terrans intellectually, a “next step in human

evolution.” Unsurprisingly, this notion did not sit well with most Terrans, who look on the Delphic as arrogant and pretentious. Subsequent generations were taught to see themselves not as superior to Terrans so much as “differently gifted.” Nevertheless, there remains a strong streak of pomposity in the Delphic psyche, one that remains despite many efforts at extirpating it over the centuries.

Interestingly, the Delphic get along well with Terrans and indeed most other species. Their innate thirst for knowledge, combined with their photographic memories, make it very easy for them to assimilate and imitate cultural traits from other species. This makes Delphics excellent diplomats, as well as scientists and researchers. Of course, members of the clade prefer to work with other Delphics above all others and experience has shown that their productivity increases dramatically when doing so. Delphics who spend long periods of time with others of their kind begin to develop a gestalt personality with these others — finishing one another’s sentences, guessing what the other is thinking, and generally unnerving ordinary Terrans, who find this tendency “creepy.” It is this psychological trait that earned the clade the definite article in their name, on the mistaken belief that all Delphics are members of a single collective mind.

The true irony is that, for all their immense intellectual gifts, the Delphic are an insecure species. Though rarely letting on to this fact, they frequently second guess themselves and view ordinary Terrans with a certain amount of envy because of the freedom they enjoy in galactic society. Although not required by law to pursue certain careers, Delphics face enormous pressure to enter scientific or diplomatic occupations and few manage to resist it. Thus, many Delphics find themselves “trapped” in careers they do not like, even if they excel



A pair of Delphic.

at them. It is for this reason that growing numbers of Delphics pursue unusual careers and spend time with Terrans and others who work on the fringes of galactic society.

## HISTORY

Like most clades, the Delphic were a product of Old Federation genetic engineering, although, unlike the Myrmidons, they were first created at the height of that interstellar state's power rather than in its waning days. Federation officials wanted a clade whose members could act in a wide variety of roles that had been previously given to computers or artificial intelligences. Thus a plan was born to create "human computers" whose logic and rationality would be joined not only to deep intuition and perceptiveness but also empathy. The Delphic proved extraordinarily well suited to their designated roles, quickly assuming a wide variety of prominent positions in the Old Federation and, by some accounts, staved off its fall for several generations due to their clever stratagems and far-sighted plans. Though Federation nevertheless fell in time, the Delphic continued to find their talents in demand on many worlds, a fact that remains true today.

## CULTURE

Unlike the Myrmidons, the Delphic do not possess interstellar states of their own. Instead, they exist within the states of other species, particularly Terrans, with whom they have lived and worked for centuries. Consequently, Delphic culture generally resembles that of baseline Terrans, but there are a few notable differences.

First and foremost, Delphics possess a rigid notion of honesty. To them, honesty is an intellectual virtue and its practical applications exceed any concerns for personal feelings. What this means is that Delphics rarely conceal even the harshest truths (as they see them) from any who ask their assessment of a situation. Delphics understand the need to be diplomatic at times, but they see no point in doing so when circumstances do not demand it. Indeed, Delphic culture emphasizes the value in "telling it like it is" as an antidote to the Terran cultural tendency toward self-deception. Indeed, Terran popular culture often portrays Delphics as tactless boors who nevertheless possess keen insights that prove useful in spite of their harshness.

Although not as obsessed with genetic purity as are the Myrmidons, Delphics nevertheless treat the continuation of their bloodlines with great import. In general, Delphics defer to their elders when it comes to marriage and procreation. Arranged marriages are the norm, while children are usually raised not by their actual parents but by an extensive network of family tutors and extended relatives. Delphics typically marry early compared to Terrans and produce offspring as soon as possible. However, spouses spend little time together and even less time with their children, focusing instead on their occupational vocations. These cultural practices have softened somewhat since the days of the Old Federation but not enough for Delphics to avoid being deemed "unfeeling" by most Terrans.

## TRAITS

Delphic characters acquire Culture (Terran) 2, Culture (The Delphic) 2, and Language (Lingua Terra) 2 for free. The Delphic also gain Perception +1, Presence +1, Empathy 1, Observe 1, Eidetic Memory and 2 bonus points to spend on skills and abilities.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

Abhors Violence, Absentminded, Cold Fish, Science!, The Task at Hand



# CZANIK

The Czanik are the first intelligent species the Terrans contacted and have played an important role in interstellar society ever since. Heirs to an ancient starfaring civilization, the Czanik nevertheless greeted the Terrans with open arms, freely sharing their knowledge of the galaxy with them and instructing them in its mysteries. The two species have thus enjoyed a unique friendship for centuries.

## PHYSIOLOGY

The Czanik look like nothing so much as ambulatory alien trees, standing close to 3 meters tall. Their trunk-like bodies look heavier than they are, with the average Czanik weighing approximately 100 kilograms. Their bodies rest on a series of muscular ciliated roots, which they use for locomotion. Czanik brains are located near the tops of their bodies, just below the many “branches” that fan out from their tops. Czanik come in several forms, with extensive variations to the basic shape depending on the ancestry of the individual Czanik, as well as the location on their homeworld of Galj from which they hailed.

The Czanik body is fibrous and “woody” in nature, beneath which run its circulatory and nervous systems. The bark-like outer covering of the body is fairly flexible, giving Czanik a good degree of mobility. As they age, this outer covering starts to harden, so that, over time, Czanik become less capable of movement; the oldest living members of the species are completely sessile without technological aid. A Czanik’s ciliated roots allow movement speeds close to that of a human at walking speed, but only the most determined Czanik can exceed this.



An adolescent Czanik.



Czanik possess one to three dozen “branches” on the tops of their bodies. These branches range in length from one-half to 2 meters in length and end in “leaves” that function both as sensory organs and as photosynthetic receptors. While Czanik are capable of using all their branches as manipulators if necessary, they are, at best, crude instruments. Over time, Czanik can learn how to use a small number of their branches more precisely, giving them something better approximating Terran arms. Czanik senses, with the exception of taste, is equivalent to that of Terrans as well.

Czanik reproduce by means of seedpods, which drop from the Czanik and, if they find fertile soil, grow into seedlings that, after several years, acquire sentience. The Czanik place no great value on seedlings or the process of reproduction, seeing both as outside their immediate interest. If they have ready access to light and nutrients, Czanik can live for hundreds of years, barring accidents.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Despite their alien appearances, the Czanik possess minds not so unlike those of Terrans that they are incomprehensible and this fact has no doubt played a large part in the ability of the two species to get along so well since First Contact. The first and most immediately apparent psychological trait of the Czanik is their intense curiosity. For as long as they have been sapient, these beings have sought out new knowledge and new experiences. Indeed, the Czanik view their lives as a continual process of growth, not merely physically but also intellectually as well and look with a combination of consternation and pity on any individual who is unwilling or, worse, uninterested in learning all he can about the universe around him.

At the same time, the Czanik are not foolhardy. They are keenly aware that the universe is often a dangerous place. Consequently, the Czanik are great planners. They are patient and willing to take the time necessary to consider every possible contingency when undertaking any complex and/or hazardous endeavor. The Czanik are frequently annoyed by Terrans, whom they consider rash and impetuous, overlooking genuine risks in their zeal for adventure. No doubt the Czanik propensity for forethought is due to their long lifespans and the slow pace of their society, but there is more to it than that. The Czanik view the universe as a vast, interlocking mystery whose secrets cannot be uncovered without a thorough and methodical approach. Even then, the universe defies easy explanation, but, without a solid plan, there can be no hope of learning or growth, a lesson the Czanik have tried many times to impress on their Terran allies.

Given all of the above, it should come as no surprise that the Czanik are xenophiles. They enjoy the company of other species and appreciate seeing the universe from other points of view. They have learned innumerable lessons from the Terrans, both technological and cultural, and have, in return, taught the younger species many lessons of their own. The Czanik view this as important part of the learning process — to learn, one must also teach and so these beings have made it their mission to spread their knowledge to all interested parties.

## HISTORY

Czanik history extends back over at least ten millennia, nearly half of which they have spent as starfarers. Like the Terrans, they discovered artifacts of the Travelers in their home system, which enabled them to use D-Drives to expand outward into the galaxy. Since then, they have ventured into innumerable star systems, slowly exploring and seeking out new evidence of the Travelers, whom the Czanik regard as one of the foremost mysteries of the cosmos. The Czanik are thus very knowledgeable about the universe beyond the

Thousand Suns, far moreso than almost any race currently in contact with the Terrans. Most species — including the Hen Jaa — look upon the Czanik as the “elder statesmen” of the galaxy and seek out their knowledge, even when they ultimately choose a path of which the Czanik would not improve.

## CULTURE

Czanik culture is extremely conservative by Terran standards. As a species with millennia of recorded history and an abiding belief that equates knowledge with growth, these beings have long cultural memories. Events that occurred centuries ago are treated as important lessons for the present. Czanik frequently refer to the past to illustrate some philosophical point and apply it to the present. That few other species know what the Czanik are talking about is beside the point. For the Czanik, what is important is that the past neither be forgotten nor treated lightly. While their culture is not hidebound or stagnant, it nevertheless rejects the notion that “newer is better” and it takes much time and experimentation before the Czanik adopt new ways.

Still, Czanik culture is not a closed one and there are always opportunities both for outsiders to interact with it and for Czanik “freethinkers” to put their unique viewpoints to good use. In part, this is because the literally slow pace at which the Czanik grow and move makes it next to impossible for them to react quickly. For this reason, they have little choice but to take the long view of things and change incrementally rather than all at once, as the Terrans and other species are wont to do.

In practical terms, most Czanik are keen experimenters, willing to try lots of unusual and even bizarre approaches to problems. They do not attempt anything that is obviously bound to fail or cause harm to themselves or to others, but the fact that something runs counter to conventional wisdom is insufficient reason for them not to try it. Should an individual Czanik come up a unique solution to a problem and be able to show its value, it might then be able to convince Czanik society at large to adopt it, but such a road is a long and arduous one that can take many years, if not longer.

Other than a broad respect for their elders, the Czanik do not have much in the way of a social hierarchy on their worlds. Most decisions are reached by democratic consensus, with special weight given to individuals with knowledge or expertise in the subject under examination. Terrans find Czanik government to be ponderous and oddly anarchic, since it is rare to find a single Czanik (or even group of them) who have the sole power to make decisions on behalf of anyone other than themselves. Consequently, the Czanik play little role in interstellar governance, quite happily leaving such responsibilities to others, with the caveat that they may choose either not to act or to act slowly to directives from authorities that theoretically have jurisdiction over them.

## TRAITS

Czanik characters acquire Culture (Czanik) and Language (Arecza) 2 for free. Czanik also gain +2 Body and –2 Dexterity, as well as Curious, Extra Limbs (x2), and Hypersensitivity. They also have Armor Restriction and Equipment Restriction. They have 9 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and abilities.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

Children will be Children, Friends are Better than Enemies, Gray Eminence, Secrets of the Universe, Slow and Steady

# HEN JAA

The alien Hen Jaa have been at odds with Terran civilization since first contacted in the days of the Old Federation. Surviving a disaster that nearly wiped out their species, the Hen Jaa went on to achieve great things during the Age of Warring States and carved out a mighty empire for themselves. Now, they eye the Thousand Suns greedily and look for any sign of Terran weakness that they might exploit for their own benefit.

## PHYSIOLOGY

Hen Jaa are six-limbed cephalopod-like beings, standing approximately 1.6 m and weighing 50 kg on average. Their six limbs are muscular hydrostats, which is to say, arms that possess no skeletal structure but only powerful muscles. Because these hydrostats are arranged radially around the central body (including a bulbous head), Hen Jaa can use them equally well for locomotion or manipulation. Under normal circumstances, Hen Jaa walk on their three hindmost limbs and use the other three as hands. If circumstances require it, however, they may use more limbs for locomotion or manipulation, being completely ambidextrous.

Hen Jaa breathe chlorine rather than oxygen. Their skin is quite porous and elastic and runs a gamut of colors from dark brown to gray. It is also quite sensitive to touch and to smell. Indeed, Hen Jaa have extraordinarily highly developed senses of touch and smell, far greater than that of Terrans. This more than makes up for their comparatively poor eyesight and hearing. Consequently, Hen Jaa are less impaired by darkness than many other species.

Hen Jaa have an internal body temperature of 28° C and prefer slightly colder climates to warmer ones. They have two genders, male and female, and hatch from eggs, which are laid in clutches of three to six, after a month-long gestation period. Hen Jaa young, though small, are born able to fend for themselves but are not deemed sentient, even by their parents, until they are approximately a year old and have shown themselves capable of attending to their own needs. Hen Jaa lifespans are short, approximately 50 standard years, although life extension technologies can add a decade or two to that span, after which all only the hardest of Hen Jaa buck the toll of their harsh biology.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Outsiders typically describe the Hen Jaa as “cruel” or at least “uncaring.” They point to their disinterest in their own young and their willingness to eliminate the old and infirm as evidence of these psychological traits, not to mention the well-known Hen Jaa penchant for the “dirty” atmospheric terraforming in which they engage against worlds they intend to colonize, whether they possess native life or not and regardless of the effects on existing ecologies. There can be little arguing with these facts, which are not mere propaganda, but those sympathetic to the Hen Jaa remind their interlocutors that these are, after all, alien beings and thus can hardly be expected to adhere to Terran or even Czanik ways of looking at the universe. Their supposed cruelty is simply a natural outgrowth of the harsh conditions of their original homeworld Luqin.

Interestingly, once a young Hen Jaa shows the ability to behave as an adult, it is readily welcomed back into society and assisted in almost every aspect of its life by other adults, not merely its parents (whom it may never identify or seek to do so). Hen Jaa have an amazing capacity for altruism and tend toward natural communism in their thought patterns. Most Hen Jaa are willing to go to great lengths to assist others of their kind, as well as those who have proven their worth from other species. Many are likewise willing to sacrifice their own

well-being or desires to the good of a larger group, a psychological trait that was strengthened after the destruction of Luqin.

Despite this, Hen Jaa are not without egos or a strong sense of self — quite the contrary! Hen Jaa are renowned as overbearing braggarts and tall tale tellers and defend their accomplishments, whether personal or as a species, with sharp words and, if necessary, violence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hen Jaa are also renowned for their quick wits and skill at hurling creative insults. Because of the musical complexity of their most widely spoken languages, few non-Hen Jaa truly appreciate the bite of their insults. To some extent, these behaviors are the results of a deep-seated inferiority complex that colors much of their interactions with other species.

## HISTORY

Hen Jaa history is a tragic one. During the closing days of the Old Federation, a quantum singularity passed too close to the Hen Jaa homeworld of Luqin, permanently damaging its atmosphere and creating tectonic disturbances on a mass scale. At the time, the Hen Jaa possessed only Class IV technology and the Federation had quarantined their planet to avoid cultural contamination. When the singularity wrought its devastation, the Federation broke the quarantine and transported as many Hen Jaa as they could save to another world (now named Panru) with a compatible biosphere. Though the Hen Jaa were saved, their culture was shattered. Not only did they have to cope with the existence of other intelligent species but also the realization that these species were vastly superior to themselves technologically.

The Hen Jaa nevertheless adapted to these revelations, quickly copying Terran technology and developing their own, which eventually led to the foundation of an interstellar empire.



A Hen Jaa at work.

The Hen Jaa viewed the rise of another Terran interstellar state with displeasure, seeing it as unwelcome rival. Over the last few centuries, the Hen Jaa have attempted to block Terran expansion wherever possible, with varying degrees of success.

## SOCIETY

As noted above, the Hen Jaa are psychologically prone to altruistic and communistic behavior toward members of their own species. This carries over into their society, which is based on similar principles. The concept of blood relation carries no meaning in Hen Jaa society, as young are raised in common and males and females do not generally form pair bonds that last longer than the month-long incubation period. There are exceptions, of course, but these are unusual and generally viewed with some suspicion by Hen Jaa society as a whole.

Hen Jaa society is, to Terran eyes anyway, a strange mix of decentralization and frightening organization. Hen Jaa prefer decisions to be reached by consensus and lack the hierarchical worldview of many other species, preferring instead to employ a distributed leadership model that encourages debate and the free exchange of ideas. While this sometimes hampers the ability of Hen Jaa society to deal with controversial topics, even pressing ones, its corollary is that, once consensus is reached, the species throws its entire weight behind it and pursues it single-mindedly.

At present, the two pursuits about which Hen Jaa society has achieved consensus are the acquisition of new worlds through terraforming, colonization, and conquest and checking Terran expansion at every turn. Because the worlds on which Hen Jaa may live comfortably without technological assistance are few, the decision was made long ago to seize them by any means necessary, lest the species be boxed in and without any means to extend its influence among the stars. This has resulted in a cold war with the Terrans and their allies, as each looks for signs of weakness in the other. Open warfare has historically been limited to only a few minor skirmishes, but that may change in the future, particularly if Hen Jaa society reaches consensus in favor of direct conflict.

## TRAITS

Hen Jaa characters acquire Culture (Hen Jaa) and Language Hen Jaa (Ja Haa Len) 2 for free. They also gain Extra Limbs (x2), Hypersensitive, and Scent. They also have Armor Restriction, Equipment Restriction, and Weak Immune System and 10 points to spend on skills and abilities.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

By Any Means, Never Again, One Step Closer, Team Player, The Galaxy Belongs to Us

# KRIILKNA

The trilaterally symmetrical, mute Kriilkna are one of the strangest species Terrans have encountered among the stars. Their unique physiology has led to the creation of an equally unique culture, one that might be called “tripolar,” as three different facets of Kriilkna psychology vie for control of this species and their interstellar empire.

## PHYSIOLOGY

The Kriilkna are a trilaterally symmetrical species whose ancestors’ closest Terran analogs were arthropods. Strictly speaking, though, the Kriilkna are not arthropods at all, lacking many of the characteristics of that phylum. Nevertheless, there are some superficial similarities, including a chitinous body and segmented legs. The chitinous outer coating of a Kriilkna is not a true exoskeleton, but it does serve to protect the body and the organs within it.

Kriilkna’s basic body shape is like that of a Terran shrimp, except that it stands semi-vertically. The body splits into three parts near the base, with three muscular appendages that can be used interchangeably as legs or arms. Typically, a Kriilkna balances itself on two appendages while walking, using the third to manipulate or carry things. Running, however, requires the use of all three appendages.

A Kriilkna’s trilateral symmetry is not limited to its externals. Most of its organs are triply redundant or at least tripartite. A foremost example of this is the Kriilkna’s brain, which consists of three lobes connected by a minimal amount of nerve tissue. This strange cerebral structure has had a profound impact on Kriilkna psychology, culture, and society and is perhaps one of the things for which the species is most known. Each Kriilkna favors one lobe of its brain over others, much in the way that a Terran might favor his left or his right hand. Depending on which lobe a Kriilkna favors, his psychology might be completely different from others of his kind. Though the Kriilkna equivalent the *corpus callosum* is smaller and possesses fewer axons than in most other species, there *is* communication between the three lobes, albeit infrequent at the highest levels of brain function, which explains much about these beings.

The Kriilkna possess three genders: fertilizers (males), egg layers (females), and incubators (neuters). Kriilkna young are born live in small clutches of two to three. After fertilization, Kriilkna eggs are deposited in a pouch on the underside of an incubator’s body, where they grow and develop over six months, after which they are ready to leave the safety of the pouch and be cared for by their parents. Kriilkna senses are mostly superior to those of Terrans, with the exception of hearing. Kriilkna depend strongly on sight and smell, at which they excel. Kriilkna have average lifespans for advanced species, with a typical one living approximately 90 standard years, although medical care can extend this by another decade or more.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Kriilkna psychology is utterly unlike that of any sapient species the Terrans have encountered. As noted above, their three-lobed brain affects their minds in profound ways. Any given Kriilkna favors one of his lobes and which one he favors determines his caste, which is thus a genetic characteristic, at least in part. Those who show evidence of proficiency with abstraction, mathematics, and music become priests. Those who show evidence of proficiency with spatial relationships and kinesthetics become warriors. Finally, those who show evidence of proficiency with creative endeavors become workers.

In general, a Kriilkna favors one lobe or another insofar as higher brain functions are concerned, which is to say, those skills and abilities that connect most directly to his caste.

Thus, a warrior is strongly “in tune” with that lobe of his brain that governs physical abilities and sensing the world around him. This does not mean, however, that he lacks creativity or abstraction. What it does mean is that he possesses less affinity for those mental characteristics than members of other castes, which is why, returning to the example, warrior Kriilkna are renowned as literal minded blockheads, even if this is far from true.

The three lobes of a Kriilkna’s brain are in constant contact with one another, but the connections are far weaker and more tenuous than between, say, the hemispheres of a Terran’s brain. When connections do occur at a higher than usual levels, they manifest as auditory and sometimes visual hallucinations. These flashes of insight into another part of their mind have a profound effect on those Kriilkna who have them and they are far more likely to take heed of them than other thoughts more consistent with their usual psychology. Such insights also forge newer, stronger connections between the lobes, which also has an effect on a Kriilkna’s personality, altering it over time and giving it a more “well rounded” character than the stereotypes Terrans and other associate with the various castes.

## HISTORY

Kriilkna history, as one might expect, is chaotic and often violent. Until the widespread acceptance of the religion known as Ybaaraa, the Kriilkna homeworld of Teektii suffered from nearly constant civil strife, as one tribe or state sought advantage over its neighbors at one time and peace at another, according to the dictates of whatever religion held sway there. Ybaaraa changed all that by creating a synthesis of many different belief systems, in the process creating honor codes by which all three castes could live (relatively) harmoniously and which encouraged cooperation among tribes and states. Over several centuries, Teektii grew more unified and strife was significantly reduced, although even the most rigorous honor codes could not fully counteract the facts of Kriilkna psychology. The discovery of the D-Drive took the Kriilkna into the wider universe and gave the species a perfect societal safety valve. Since then, the Kriilkna have established themselves a important, if frustrating, players on the interstellar stage.

## CULTURE

Kriilkna culture is heavily influenced by Ybaaraa, a religion that arose to make sense of the sometimes-conflicting nature of Kriilkna flashes of insight. Prior to the religion’s appearance, individual Kriilkna often interpreted their flashes of insight as revelations from their many gods and acted on them as if they were divine commands. Unsurprisingly, many such insights did not agree either with existing tradition or the insights of other Kriilkna, creating an environment in which new cults, ideologies, and philosophies rose and fell with amazing rapidity, in the process sparking wars and societal disruption.

Ybaaraa changed all that by seeking the commonality behind all insights as evidence of a divine plan that transcends the particulars of any single individual’s insight and joins it to a larger picture. This is done through a variety of methods, foremost among them being an extensive cataloguing of all known insights and the circumstances under which they occurred. The priestly caste then examines and debates these insights in light of other known insights, which in turn has created a vast collection of laws, traditions, and taboos, all of which work as precedents in determining the precise meaning of any given insight. Over time, Kriilkna have been taught not to treat any given insight as necessarily having a plain meaning apart from what he gone before and this has helped to maintain social cohesion among these beings.



Of course, Ybaaraa is not universally accepted and some Kriilkna still cling to the “old ways,” acting on their insights according to their own personal interpretations of them rather than those of the priestly caste. Thus, rebellions and upheavals still occur, though not as regularly as they once did. Still, Kriilkna society remains far more fractious than that of many interstellar species. Their starfaring empire is a collection of dozens of quasi-autonomous principalities and theocracies, engaged in a crazy quilt of alliances and antagonisms, all kept under wraps by a desire to avoid disruptive strife and to stake a claim among the Thousand Suns. Thus far, this approach has worked well enough. How long it shall continue to do so remains an open question.

## TRAITS

Kriilkna characters acquire Culture (Kriilkna) 2 and Language (Kuumen) 2 for free. Kriilkna also gain Armor Restriction, Bony Spurs, Equipment Restriction, Extra Arms, Natural Armor (AV 5), and Observe 1. Kriilkna of the priest caste have +1 Perception, while those of the warrior and worker castes have +1 Body. Kriilkna of all castes also have 5 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and abilities.

## SAMPLE HOOKS

Don't Touch That, Insightful, Old Time Religion, On a Mission from God, Room Enough for All



A Kriilkna of the warrior caste.



An esper demonstrating the utility of telekinesis.

# CHAPTER 4: CAREER PACKAGES

*Well, given sufficient automation, you don't need much crew. The all-around Renaissance man has come back these days, with a battery of computers to specialize for him. But some jobs remain that machines don't do well. They haven't the motivation, the initiative, the organismic character of true sophonts. We — each civilized species man's encountered — we've never succeeded in building a hundred percent robotic vessel for more than the elementary, cut-and-dried jobs. And when you're exploring, trading, conducting a war, anything that takes you into unpredictable situations, the size of crew you need goes up. Partly to meet psychological necessities, of course; but partly to fulfill the mission itself in all its changing complexity.*

—Poul Anderson, "Satan's World" (1969)

# CHAPTER 4: CAREER PACKAGES

A career package is a collection of skills and ability bonuses representing a character's prior training and experiences. Each career package has three levels, each of which has a numerical value: Novice (1), Experienced (2), and Veteran (3). Beginning characters may choose a number of career packages up to a numerical value of three. That means a player may choose three Novice career packages ( $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ ), one Novice and one Experienced ( $1 + 2 = 3$ ), or one Veteran.

Each level of a career package subsumes the previous level in terms of skill ranks and ability bonuses. Thus, if a player chooses to make his character a Veteran of the Navy, for example, he need only look at the Veteran-level Navy skills and abilities to determine those he receives. On the other hand, if a player chooses to make his character Experienced in the Navy and Novice in Pirate, he would then look at the Experienced-level of Navy and the Novice-level of Pirate career packages and add together the skill ranks and ability bonuses to determine those his character receives.

## career package levels

Starting *THOUSAND SUNS* characters can be quite skilled, especially those with a Veteran-level career package. The target numbers for many of their skills can be high enough that their chance of success under normal circumstances is 75% or more. Consequently, some Game Masters may wish to limit starting characters to two Novice or one Experienced-level career package. Characters generated under this option are less skilled and fail more often and have a much greater scope for improvement over time than do those generated under the standard rules.

## ADDING SKILL RANKS

Skill ranks acquired through the choice of homeworld and career packages are additive, meaning that one simply adds the ranks from each together to determine your character's total ranks in that skill. For example, a character from a High Population world in the Marches receives Technical Sciences 2. If this character is a Veteran of the Navy, he also receives Technical Sciences 2. Adding the two together yields Technical Sciences 4. Likewise, a Middle Class character from a Core world receives Bureaucracy 2. If he is a Novice-level Academic and an Experienced-level Civil Servant, he also receives Bureaucracy 1 and Bureaucracy 3 respectively from his career packages. Adding these all together yields Bureaucracy 6.

## SPECIALIZATIONS

Some skills allow specializations (p. 79), which are areas of particular concentration under the umbrella of the skill in question. For example, History is a specialization of Social Sciences, while Energy Pistol is a specialization of Shoot. For example, if your character has

If for some reason you would like to create your own career packages or simply dispense with them entirely, use the following formulas:

**Novice:** 25 points.

**Experienced:** 50 points.

**Veteran:** 70 points.

**Skills:** 1 point per rank (and rarely granted above level 6). Rank 0 skills cost nothing but no more than 1 or 2 such skills are available per package.

**Specialization:** 1 point per specialization.

**Ability Bonuses:** 2 points per +1 (and rarely granted above +2).

A Veteran character created according to free-form rules would thus have 70 points with which to buy skills and ability bonuses, using the aforementioned costs.

Physical Sciences 3 and he acquires a specialization in Chemistry, you would write down Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 3 on your character sheet.

Specializations function a bit like unrestricted hooks, in that there is no need to use action points to activate them. Whenever you roll a test where the specialization is pertinent, you may choose either a +2 bonus to the TN or a re-roll without penalty. Unlike skills, specializations have no ranks. Using the above example, if your character gains a rank in Physical Sciences, it has no effect on the way his Chemistry specialization is noted on your character sheet.

Anytime a character gains ranks in a skill he already possesses but with a different specialization, the specialization is simply added to the parentheses following the skill. For example, if a character has Bureaucracy (Legal) 1 and gains Bureaucracy (Military) 1, he now has Bureaucracy (Legal, Military) 1. New specializations can also be acquired through the expenditure of experience points (see *Spending Experience Points*, p. 192).

## OTHER IMPORTANT PHRASES

Some career packages use one of two specific phrases that limit the choices you may make in choosing between various options. These phrases are bolded in the package listings and are defined here to avoid confusion. They are:

- **[number] additional:** This means you may choose the appropriate number of new skills that meet the criteria that follow, which is to say skills your character does not already possess from that career package. Thus, if the Package says you may choose “two additional Dexterity-based skills, one at rank 3 and one at rank 2,” you may choose any two skills you wish based on Dexterity provided that your character did not already acquire ranks in those skills from that career package, though your character could have acquired them by other means.
- **a total of [number] ranks:** This means you may choose an appropriate number of ranks from *new or existing* skills, including specializations. Thus, if a package says you may choose “a total of three ranks from any skills you choose,” you may use those ranks to buy new skills or to increase the ranks of skills or specializations your character already has. You may also use them to buy new specializations or increase your ranks in existing ones, bearing in mind the standard rules regarding specializations noted elsewhere.

## ACADEMIC

Academics are professional scholars rather than researchers. Many are also educators teaching at universities and colleges through the Thousand Suns. Academics have a reputation for being removed from reality, living in so-called ivory towers without any cares except their studies and the petty disputes they have with other academics. This reputation contains some truth, but the reality is that galactic society derives many benefits from their scholarship and, in their own way, academics stave off the process of decivilization as fiercely as anyone.

**Novice:** Perception +2, Any two skills as academic specialties 2 (each), Bureaucracy (Academic) 1, Computers (Research) 2, Diplomacy (Debate) 2, Performance (Oratory) 2, Profession (Academic) 2, Socialize 1, any one skill as a secondary academic specialty 1, and two ranks toward any specializations of any academic specialty skills.

**Experienced:** Perception +2, Any two skills as academic specialties 4 (each), Bureaucracy (Academic) 4, Computers (Research) 4, Diplomacy (Debate) 4, Language 2, Observe 2, Performance (Oratory) 4, Profession (Academic) 5, Socialize 3, any one skill as a secondary academic specialty 3, and three ranks toward any specializations of any academic specialty skills.

**Veteran:** Perception +2, Any two skills as academic specialties 6, Bureaucracy (Academic) 6, Computers (Research) 5, Diplomacy (Debate) 5, Language 4, Observe 4, Performance (Oratory) 6, Profession (Academic) 7, Socialize 5, any one skill as a secondary academic specialty 4, and four ranks toward and specializations of any academic specialty skills.

## ARISTOCRAT

An aristocrat is a wealthy individual whose wealth buys him respect and influence. In an imperial setting, an aristocrat may in fact be a titled member of the nobility, while in a federation setting he is most likely the scion of a powerful political or mercantile family. In either case, an aristocrat is skilled at making friends and influencing people — as well as whatever other personal hobbies he may have chosen for himself.

**Novice:** Will +2, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 2, Culture 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Language 2, Observe 2, Socialize 2, plus **two additional** skills of the player's choice at rank 2 each.

■ *Knight, Baronet*

**Experienced:** Will +2, Bargain 3, Bureaucracy 4, Culture 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Language 4, Observe 4, Socialize 4, plus **three additional** skills of the player's choice at rank 4 each.

■ *Baron, Marquis*

**Veteran:** Will +2, Bargain 5, Bureaucracy 5, Culture 6, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 4, Language 6, Observe 6, Socialize 6, plus **four additional** skills of the player's choice at rank 4 each.

■ *Count, Duke*

## ARMY

Often considered its least glamorous branch, the Army (more formally known as the Ground Forces) is nevertheless a vital part of any interstellar military, providing the ground troops that protect and defend worlds during times of peace and war.

**Novice:** Athletics 2, Bureaucracy (Military) 1, Defend 2, Diplomacy 1, Dodge 2, Heavy Weapons 1, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 1, Profession (Army) 2, Shoot 2, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 2, and either Intimidation 2 (if Officer) or Technical Sciences 2 (if Enlisted).

■ *Private, Lance-Corporal, Corporal; O: Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, Captain*

**Experienced:** Athletics 4, Bureaucracy (Military) 2, Defend 3, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 3, Heavy Weapons 3, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 3, Profession (Army) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2, and either Intimidation 3 (if Officer) or Technical Sciences 3 (if Enlisted) and **a total of two ranks** from any of the following: Culture, Engineering, Gaming, Gunnery, Intrusion, Language, and Streetwise.

■ *Sergeant, Staff Sergeant; O: Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel*

**Veteran:** Athletics 5, Bureaucracy (Military) 3, Defend 4, Diplomacy 3, Dodge 4, Heavy Weapons 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 5, Profession (Army) 5, Shoot 6, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 3, and either Intimidation 4 (if Officer) or Technical Sciences 4 (if Enlisted) and **a total of three ranks** from any of the following: Culture, Engineering, Gaming, Gunnery, Intrusion, Language, and Streetwise.

■ *Sergeant Major; O: Brigadier, Major General, Lieutenant General*



Army troopers being deployed to quell local unrest.



## BARBARIAN

Societies on many worlds collapsed alongside the Old Federation, descending into cultural and technological barbarism, a situation only made worse during the Age of Warring States. Although the Concord brought peace to the Thousand Suns, even after five centuries there remain worlds that never enjoyed the boons it promised, least of all high technology. Barbarians call such worlds home and, while most remain trapped on them, a few manage to make it to the stars and see the wider galaxy of which their world is but a small part.

**Novice:** Animal Handling 2, Athletics 2, Bargain 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 2, Observe 2, Streetwise (Scrounging) 1, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 2, and **a total of two ranks** from any skills of your choice.

**Experienced:** +2 to any **one** Attribute, Animal Handling 4, Athletics 4, Bargain 4, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 4, Observe 4, Resist 2, Streetwise (Scrounging) 2, Survival 5, and **a total of five ranks** from any skills of your choice.

**Veteran:** +2 to any **one** Attribute, Animal Handling 5, Athletics 6, Bargain 6, Defend 6, Dodge 6, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 3, Melee 6, Observe 6, Resist 3, Streetwise (Scrounging) 3, Survival 7, and **a total of seven ranks** from any skills of your choice.

## BELTER

A Belter is an asteroid miner, whether working for a megacorporation or independently as a prospector. Eking out a marginal existence in space, belters have a well-earned reputation for being tenacious and determined — and always hungry for “the Big Score” that will make their years of drilling rocks in a weightless environment finally pay off.

**Novice:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 2, Athletics 2, Computers 1, Engineering 2, Observe 2, Piloting 2, Physical Sciences (Geology) 1, Profession (Belter) 2, Streetwise 2, Technical Sciences (Space Suit) 2, and any two additional skills as individual specialties 2.

**Experienced:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 4, Athletics 3, Computers 3, Dodge 2, Engineering 4, Observe 3, Piloting 4, Physical Sciences (Geology) 3, Profession (Belter) 4, Streetwise 3, Technical Sciences (Space Suit) 4, Vehicle Operation 2, and any two additional skills as individual specialties 4.

**Veteran:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 6, Athletics 4, Computers 4, Dodge 4, Engineering 6, Observe 4, Piloting 5, Physical Sciences (Geology) 4, Profession (Belter) 6, Streetwise 4, Technical Sciences (Space Suit) 6, Vehicle Operation 4, and any two additional skills as individual specialties 5.

## BOUNTY HUNTER

The diffuse nature of interstellar government, combined with the vast number of worlds easily accessible by the jumplines, makes it easy for criminals and lawbreakers to flee rather than face prosecution for their misdeeds. Consequently, bounty hunters fill a much-needed role, even if many government and law enforcement officials view them with disdain.

**Novice:** Body +1, Bargain 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Criminal) 1, Melee 1, Observe 2, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 2, Shoot 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 2, Streetwise (Contacts) 2, Subterfuge 2, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 2

**Experienced:** Body +2, Bargain 2, Intimidation 4, Intrusion 2, Investigation (Criminal) 4, Melee 2, Observe 4, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth (Shadowing) 4, Streetwise (Contacts) 4, Subterfuge 3, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 4.

**Veteran:** Body +2, Bargain 3, Intimidation 6, Intrusion 3, Investigation (Criminal) 6, Melee 3, Observe 6, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 5, Shoot 6, Stealth (Shadowing) 6, Streetwise (Contacts) 6, Subterfuge 4, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 6.

## CIVIL SERVANT

The civil service is the oil that lubricates the machinery of interstellar governance. Although the job is often boring, the best civil servants work to ensure that bureaucracy does not become an end in itself and that the needs of citizens are every bit as important as political expedience.

**Novice:** Perception, Presence, or Will +1, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 3, Computers (Research) 2, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation (Bluster) 1, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Civil Servant) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1.

**Experienced:** Perception, Presence, or Will +2, Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 5, Computers (Research) 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation (Bluster) 3, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Profession (Civil Servant) 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2, and a total of 4 ranks from any skills.

**Veteran:** Perception, Presence, or Will +2, Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 7, Computers (Research) 5, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation (Bluster) 5, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Profession (Civil Servant) 6, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3, and a total of 5 ranks from any skills.

## COLONIST

Most of the worlds of the Thousand Suns have no native sapient species of their own, but a great many of them are nonetheless inhabited, thanks to individuals who choose to leave the safety and comfort of their planets of origin to help settle a new frontier. Colonists come from all walks of life but share a common trait: the determination to do what it takes to tame a new world.

**Novice:** Body and Will +1, Athletics 2, Bargain 2, Defend 1, Dodge 1, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Observe 2, Profession (Specialization) 2, Resist 2, Survival 2, Vehicle Operation 2, and 3 ranks in any skills.

**Experienced:** Body and Will: one at +1 and one at +2, Athletics 5, Bargain 4, Defend 3, Dodge 3, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Observe 4, Profession (Specialization) 4, Resist 4, Survival 5, Vehicle Operation 4, and 5 ranks in any skills.

**Veteran:** Body and Will +2, Athletics 6, Bargain 6, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 3, Observe 6, Profession (Specialization) 6, Resist 6, Survival 6, Vehicle Operation 6, and 8 ranks in any skills.

## CRIMINAL

The return of interstellar governance also guaranteed the return of interstellar crime. Whether belonging to small planet-bound gangs or true galactic mafias, criminals are a part of life in the Thousand Suns. Like pirates, some take advantage of the short arm of interstellar authority and the multiplicity of worlds to hide in the shadows and undertake their illegal ventures. A few operate more openly, going so far as to run entire worlds right under the nose of the law.

**Novice:** Bargain 2, Empathy (Lies) 1, Intrusion 2, Intimidation 2, Melee 1, Observe 2, Profession (Criminal) 2, Socialize 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Unarmed Combat 2.

**Experienced:** Bargain 4, Empathy (Lies) 2, Intrusion 4, Intimidation 4, Melee 2, Observe 4, Profession (Criminal) 4, Shoot 4, Socialize 3, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4, Unarmed Combat 3, and a **total of 3 ranks** from any skills of your choice.

**Veteran:** Bargain 5, Empathy (Lies) 3, Intrusion 6, Intimidation 5, Melee 3, Observe 5, Profession (Criminal) 6, Socialize 4, Shoot 6, Stealth 5, Streetwise 6, Subterfuge 6, Unarmed Combat 4, and a **total of 5 ranks** from any skills of your choice.

## DIPLOMAT

War may be a constant, but it's the job of diplomats to ensure that it's not common. Diplomats seek compromise and negotiated solutions to problems before they boil over into conflict.

**Novice:** Will +2, Bargain 2, Diplomacy 3, Culture 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Language 2, Observe 2, Profession (Diplomat) 2, Socialize (State Dinners) 1, Social Sciences 2.

**Experienced:** Will +2, Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 2, Diplomacy 5, Culture 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Language 4, Observe 4, Performance (Oratory) 2, Profession (Diplomat) 4, Socialize (State Dinners) 3, Social Sciences 4.

**Veteran:** Will +2, Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 4, Diplomacy 7, Culture 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 6, Language 5, Observe 6, Performance (Oratory) 4, Profession (Diplomat) 6, Socialize (State Dinners) 4, Social Sciences 4.

## DOCTOR

In this context, a "doctor" is any medical or health care professional, whether or not he possesses an actual medical degree.

**Novice:** Perception +2, Computers 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Investigation 1, Life Sciences (Biology) 2, Medical Sciences 3, Observe 2, Profession (Doctor) 2, Socialize 2, Technical Sciences 2.

**Experienced:** Perception +2, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Investigation 3, Life Sciences (Biology) 4, Medical Sciences 5, Observe 4, Profession (Doctor) 4, Socialize 4, Technical Sciences 4, and a total of 3 ranks in Medical Sciences or specializations thereof.

**Veteran:** Perception +3, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 4, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Investigation 5, Life Sciences (Biology) 6, Medical Sciences 7, Observe 6, Profession (Doctor) 6, Socialize 5, Technical Sciences 4, and a total of 4 ranks in Medical Sciences or specializations thereof.

## ENTERTAINER

From the Core to Wildspace, people want to be entertained and are willing to pay for the privilege. Entertainers, ranging from singers to Zero-G ballet dancers, can found on nearly every world of the Thousand Suns. The most celebrated entertainers travel from world to world and enjoy the accolades of millions of admirers.

**Novice:** Any one ability +2, Bargain (Charm) 2, Culture 2, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 2, Empathy (Emotions) 2, Performance 3, Profession (Specialization) 2, Socialize (Carousing) 2, and a total of 2 ranks from any skills.

**Experienced:** Any one ability +2, Bargain (Charm) 4, Computers 2, Culture 4, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 4, Empathy (Emotions) 2, Observe 3, Performance 5, Profession (Specialization) 5, Socialize (Carousing) 4, Streetwise (Contacts) 2, and a total of 6 ranks from any skills.

**Veteran:** Any one ability +2, Bargain (Charm) 6, Computers 4, Culture 5, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 6, Empathy (Emotions) 5, Observe 4, Performance 7, Profession (Specialization) 6, Socialize (Carousing) 6, Streetwise (Contacts) 3, and a total of 9 ranks from any skills.

## JOURNALIST

News reporting has changed a great deal in the centuries since mankind first left the cradle of Terra, but the need for it remains. The journalists of the Thousand Suns travel to many worlds, seeking out stories to transmit back to their employers, for the enjoyment and edification of readers on dozens of worlds.

**Novice:** Perception +2, Bargain 2, Computers 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Journalist) 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise (Contacts) 2

**Experienced:** Perception +2, Bargain 5, Computers 4, Diplomacy 5, Empathy 5, Investigation 5, Observe 5, Profession (Journalist) 4, Socialize 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise (Contacts) 4

**Veteran:** Perception +3, Bargain 7, Computers 5, Diplomacy 7, Empathy 6, Investigation 7, Observe 7, Profession (Journalist) 6, Socialize 6, Stealth 6, Streetwise (Contacts) 6



A journalist interviewing a diplomat.

## LAW ENFORCER

Law enforcers take a variety of forms, including planet-bound cops and interstellar investigators. This career covers any civilian whose primary occupation is the investigation of crimes and the apprehension of lawbreakers.

**Novice:** Athletics 1, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy (Legal) 1, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Diplomacy 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Criminal) 2, Observe 2, Profession (Law Enforcer) 2, Shoot 2, Streetwise 1, Unarmed Combat 2.

**Experienced:** Athletics 3, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy (Legal) 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Criminal) 4, Observe 4, Profession (Law Enforcer) 4, Shoot 4, Streetwise 3, Unarmed Combat 4.

**Veteran:** Athletics 4, Bargain 3, Bureaucracy (Legal) 3, Defend 6, Dodge 5, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 6, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Criminal) 6, Observe 6, Profession (Law Enforcer) 5, Shoot 6, Streetwise 6, Unarmed Combat 5.

## MARINE

The Marines (more properly, Naval Infantry or, sometimes, Fleet Infantry) are a branch of the Navy, although most Marines tend to downplay this fact, preferring instead to think of themselves as a branch all their own. Nevertheless, Marines serve as security guards on naval vessels and at military bases. Their primary role, though, is as drop troops that establish beachheads on enemy-held worlds and installations. Consequently, the Naval Infantry possesses some of the toughest and most battle-hardened troops in the Thousand Suns.

**Novice:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 1, Athletics 2, Bureaucracy (Military) 1, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 2, Profession (Marine) 1, Shoot 2, Survival 1, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 1, and one of the following: Gunnery, Heavy Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at rank 1.

■ *Armsman, Leading Armsman, Lance Sergeant; O: Cadet, Subaltern, Sublieutenant*

**Experienced:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 3, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy (Military) 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 3, Profession (Marine) 3, Shoot 4, Survival 3, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2, and one of the following: Gunnery, Heavy Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at rank 3.

■ *Squad Sergeant, Platoon Sergeant; O: Lieutenant, Subcommander, Commander*

**Veteran:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 4, Athletics 4, Bureaucracy (Military) 2, Defend 5, Dodge 5, Intimidation 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 5, Profession (Marine) 6, Shoot 6, Survival 5, Tactics 6, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 3, and **one** of the following: Gunnery, Heavy Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at rank 5.

■ *Gunnery Sergeant, Master Gunner; O: Captain, Captain-General*

## MISSIONARY

Though some view religion as a relic of the past that all species “outgrow” as their societies become more advanced and sophisticated, history teaches otherwise. Despite centuries of high technology and travel among the stars, religion remains a potent force in the Thousand Suns. Consequently, missionaries can be found everywhere, traveling to other worlds to spread their faith to unbelievers.

**Novice:** Perception and Presence +1, Culture 2, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 2, Empathy 2, Language 2, Performance (Oratory) 2, Profession (Clergy) 2, Socialize 2, Social Sciences (Theology) 2, and 2 additional skills as individual specialties (each at rank 1)

**Experienced:** Perception +1, Presence +2, Culture 4, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 4, Empathy 4, Language 4, Performance (Oratory) 4, Profession (Clergy) 4, Socialize 4, Social Sciences (Theology) 4, and 3 additional skills as individual specialties (each at rank 3)

**Veteran:** Perception and Presence +2, Culture 6, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 6, Empathy 6, Language 6, Performance (Oratory) 6, Profession (Clergy) 6, Socialize 5, Social Sciences (Theology) 6, and 3 additional skills as individual specialties (each at rank 4)

## NAVY

The Navy is the perhaps the most celebrated branch of the military, because it is a prime guarantor of the Concord by protecting the jumplines from piracy and foreign powers. Unfortunately, the Thousand Suns are large and, even with an infinite budget, the Navy could never patrol their entirety. Most naval commanders are thus given wide discretion to act according to their own judgments and this reality has only added to the service's fame, as starship captains throughout history have shown astounding resourcefulness in the face of remarkable odds and come out on top.

**Novice:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 1, Athletics 2, Bureaucracy (Military) 1, Computers 2, Defend 1, Diplomacy 1, Dodge 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 1, Profession (Navy) 2, Shoot 1, Tactics 2, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 1 and **two** of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at rank 1 each.

■ *Apprentice (Specialty), Able (Specialty), Senior (Specialty); O: Cadet, Subaltern, Sublieutenant*

**Experienced:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 2, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy (Military) 2, Computers 4, Defend 3, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 3, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 2, Profession (Navy) 4, Shoot 3, Tactics 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 3, and **two** of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at rank 3 each.

■ *Petty Officer (Specialty) 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, Petty Officer (Specialty) 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Petty Officer (Specialty) 1<sup>st</sup> Class; O: Lieutenant, Subcommander, Commander*

**Veteran:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 4, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy (Military) 3, Computers 4, Defend 4, Diplomacy 3, Dodge 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 3, Profession (Navy) 6, Shoot 5, Tactics 6, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 4, and **two** of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at rank 5 each.

■ *Chief Petty Officer (Specialty), Senior Chief Petty Officer (Specialty), Master Chief Petty Officer (Specialty); O: Captain, Commodore*



## PIRATE

Where there is commerce, there are pirates. While the Navy does its best to put down piracy whenever it appears, there are only so many naval vessels and far too many star systems. In the Marches and in Wildspace, pirates find many places to hide and so this dishonorable profession continues to thrive in the Thousand Suns.

**Novice:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 1, Bargain 2, Defend 1, Dodge 1, Intimidation 2, Melee 2, Profession (Pirate) 2, Shoot 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Tactics 1, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 2, and **one** of the following at rank 2: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences.

**Experienced:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 2, Bargain 3, Defend 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Melee 3, Profession (Pirate) 4, Shoot 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Tactics 3, Technical Sciences 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and **two** of the following, one at rank 4 and one at rank 2: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences.

**Veteran:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 3, Bargain 4, Defend 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Melee 5, Profession (Pirate) 5, Shoot 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5, Tactics 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 5, and **two** of the following, one at rank 6 and one at rank 4: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences.



Initiating first contact with the Chabuli.



## REBEL

If war is the continuation of politics by other means, then rebels are among the greatest politicians in the galaxy. From the Core worlds to Wildspace, there are individuals who have taken up arms against the authorities when they believed they had no other recourse for their grievances. Although the Civil War put an end to the largest rebel groups, plenty of others still exist and, despite government propaganda to the contrary, they are growing.

**Novice:** Bargain 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Observe 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 2 and **a total of three ranks** from any skills.

**Experienced:** Bargain 4, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Observe 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Survival 4, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and **a total of four ranks** from any skills.

**Veteran:** Bargain 5, Defend 6, Dodge 6, Empathy 5, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Stealth 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5, Survival 6, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 6, and **a total of five ranks** from any skills.

## SCIENTIST

Scientists differ from pure academics in that they are researchers and experimenters rather than scholars. Scientists study a wide variety of phenomena, from jumpline physics to Traveler technology. Because such research generally has more immediately practical applications than academic work, megacorporations and governments, as well as institutions of higher learning, employ scientists and some are quite well recompensed for their work.

**Novice:** Perception +2, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Diplomacy 2, Investigation (Research) 1, Observe 2, Profession (Scientist) 2, Socialize 2, and **three additional** Perception-based skills (one at rank 3 and two at rank 2).

**Experienced:** Perception +3, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 4, Culture or Language 2, Diplomacy 4, Investigation (Research) 4, Observe 4, Profession (Scientist) 4, Socialize 4, and **three additional** Perception-based skills (one at rank 5 and two at rank 3).

**Veteran:** Perception +3, Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 5, Computers 5, Culture or Language 3, Diplomacy 5, Investigation (Research) 6, Observe 6, Profession (Scientist) 6, Socialize 6, and **three additional** Perception-based skills (one at rank 7 and two at rank 5).

## SCOUT

The galaxy is a big place and someone has to explore it. A scout is a professional interstellar explorer, usually employed by a government (and sometimes as a member of a paramilitary or military organization), a megacorporation, or a local authority. Scouts possess a wide variety of skills and are accustomed to operating far outside civilized space without anything but their own resources to call upon.

**Novice:** Culture 1, Diplomacy (First Contact) 1, Language 1, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Observe 2, Physical Sciences 2, Profession (Scout) 2, Shoot 1, Social Sciences 2, Survival 2, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 1, and **a total of three ranks** from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

**Experienced:** Culture 3, Diplomacy (First Contact) 3, Language 3, Life Sciences 4, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Observe 4, Physical Sciences 4, Profession (Scout) 4, Shoot 2, Social Sciences 4, Survival 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 2, and **a total of five ranks**

from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

**Veteran:** Culture 5, Diplomacy (First Contact) 5, Language 4, Life Sciences 5, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 3, Observe 6, Physical Sciences 5, Profession (Scout) 6, Shoot 3, Social Sciences 5, Survival 6, Technical Sciences 5, Unarmed Combat 3, and **a total of seven ranks** from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

## SPY

Espionage is as old as civilization itself and remains an important part of future society as well. Interstellar and planetary governments, as well as militaries, corporations, and even organizations employ spies. Indeed, the scope for espionage is probably greater in the Thousand Suns than it has been in many millennia and individuals adept at surreptitiously undertaking missions without being detected are in high demand.

**Novice:** Bargain 2, Defend 2, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 1, Empathy (Lies) 1, Intrusion 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Spy) 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Unarmed Combat 2, and **a total of two ranks** from any skills.

**Experienced:** Bargain 4, Defend 3, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 2, Empathy (Lies) 3, Intrusion 4, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Profession (Spy) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and **a total of five ranks** from any skills of your choice.

**Veteran:** Bargain 5, Defend 4, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 4, Empathy (Lies) 5, Intrusion 6, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Profession (Spy) 5, Shoot 5, Stealth 6, Streetwise 4, Unarmed Combat 5, and **a total of seven ranks** from any skills of your choice.

## STARSHIP CREW MEMBER

Although computers run many systems aboard starships, they do not — indeed, cannot — run them all. Consequently, most starships boast living crews, each of whom is given a vital role in ensuring the starships of the Thousand Suns continue to operate.

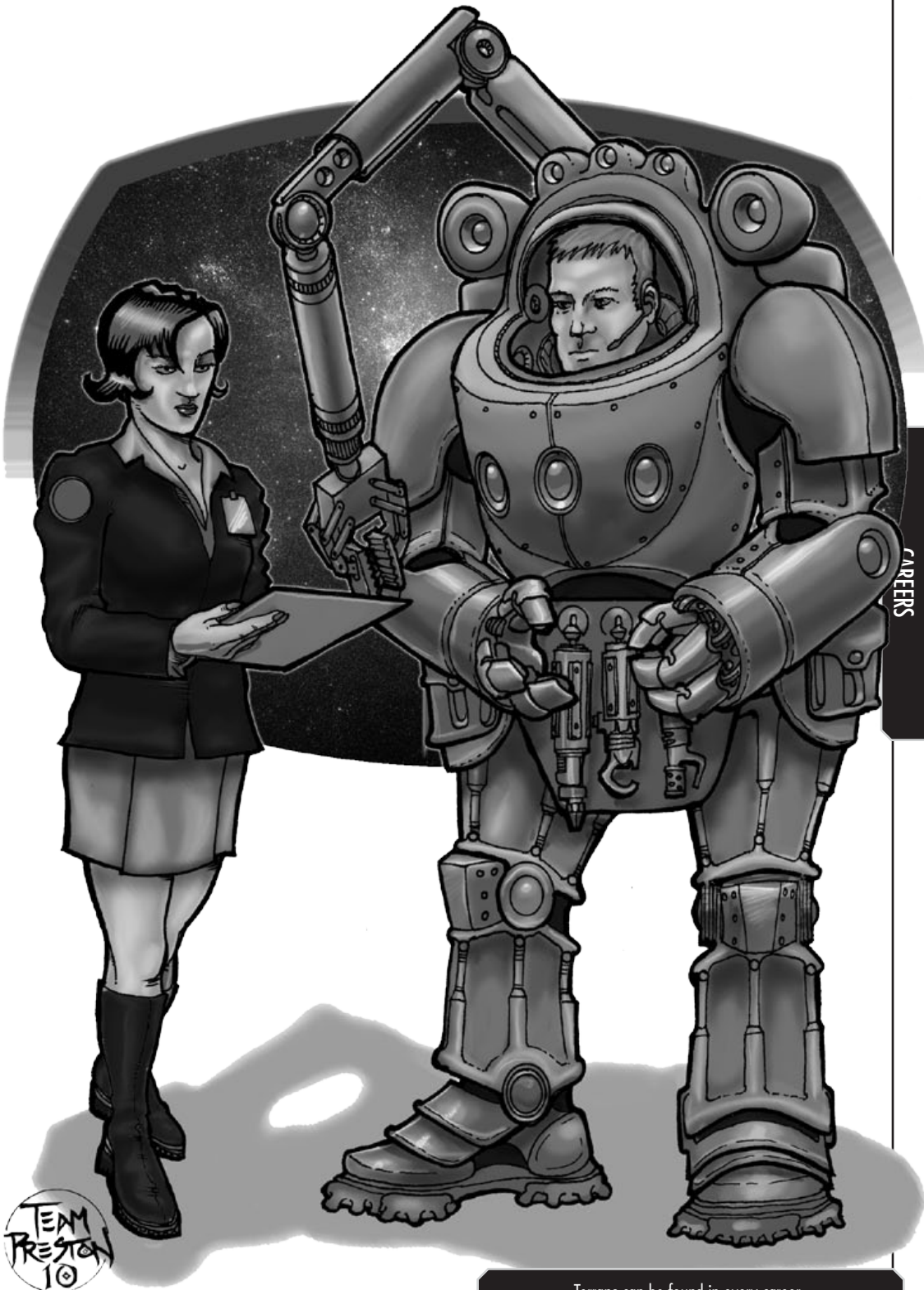
**Novice:** Perception +1, Acrobatics (Zero-G) 2, Computers 3, Engineering (Specialization) 2, Observe 2, Physical Sciences (Computer Science, Mathematics, or Physics) 2, Profession (Starship Crew) 3, Space Sciences 3, Technical Sciences (Specialization) 2

**Experienced:** Perception +2, Acrobatics (Zero-G) 5, Computers 5, Engineering (Specialization) 5, Observe 5, Physical Sciences (Computer Science, Mathematics, or Physics) 5, Profession (Starship Crew) 5, Space Sciences (Specialization) 5, Technical Sciences (Specialization) 5 and Gaming or Socialize at rank 2.

**Veteran:** Perception +2, Acrobatics (Zero-G) 7, Computers 6, Engineering (Specialization) 7, Observe 6, Physical Sciences (Computer Science, Mathematics, or Physics) 7, Profession (Starship Crew) 7, Space Sciences (Specialization) 7, Technical Sciences (Specialization) 7 and Gaming or Socialize at rank 4 and **a total of three ranks** from any skills of your choice.

## SURVIVALIST

Life on many worlds in the Marches and Wildspace is harsh and it takes a special breed of person to master it. Survivalists are individuals who have learned to live off the land and avoid the worst dangers of unforgiving environments. While not all survivalists are natives to inhospitable worlds, most find such worlds the best places to ply their unique trade, whether as guides, scouts, or surveyors.



TEAM  
PRESTON  
10

Terrans can be found in every career.



**Novice:** Body +2, Animal Handling 1, Athletics 2, Defend 2, Dodge 1, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 2, Observe 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 2.

**Experienced:** Body +2, Animal Handling 3, Athletics 4, Defend 4, Dodge 3, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 3, Melee 4, Observe 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 4.

**Veteran:** Body +2, Animal Handling 3, Athletics 6, Defend 6, Dodge 5, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 4, Melee 6, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Stealth 6, Survival 7, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 6.

## TRADER

The free flow of trade is one of the cornerstones of the Concord and the lifeblood of interstellar governance. Many traders work for megacorporations or other commercial ventures, but many more work independently, plying their wares to individual worlds in the Marches or even in Wildspace. Traders thus keep the Thousand Suns connected and play a role every bit as essential as the Navy in ensuring that the wreck of the Old Federation is not repeated.

**Novice:** Bargain (Trade) 2, Bureaucracy 2, Culture 1, Diplomacy (Negotiation) 1, Empathy 2, Language 1, Observe 2, Profession (Trader) 2, Socialize 2, Technical Sciences 2, and three of the following, one at rank 3, one at rank 2, and one at rank 1: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.

**Experienced:** Bargain (Trade) 3, Bureaucracy 4, Culture 3, Diplomacy (Negotiation) 3, Empathy 4, Language 4, Observe 3, Profession (Trader) 4, Socialize 4, Technical Sciences 4, and three of the following, one at rank 5, one at rank 4, and one at rank 3: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.



An esper employing telekinetic blast.

**Veteran:** Bargain (Trade) 6, Bureaucracy 5, Culture 5, Diplomacy (Negotiation) 6, Empathy 6, Language 4, Observe 5, Profession (Trader) 6, Socialize 5, Technical Sciences 5, and **three** of the following, one at rank 6, one at rank 5, and one at rank 4: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.

## ESPER CAREER PACKAGES

For those campaigns that include psi powers (see **Chapter 7**, starting on p. 108), two psi-related career packages are presented here.

### ESPER

In the years since Terrans discovered the D-Drive, the powers of the mind have been systematically researched. Those gifted with psi powers have found a place for themselves among the Thousand Suns. This career package represents a “generalist” psi user and can easily be tailored for more specific psi-related careers.

**Novice:** Will +2, Empathy 1, Observe 1, Profession (Specialization) 2, Resist 2, any one psi power at rank 3, any three psi powers of your choice at rank 2 each, and **a total of six ranks** from any skills (including psi powers) of your choice.

**Experienced:** Will +2, Empathy 3, Observe 2, Profession (Specialization) 3, Resist 4, any three psi powers at rank 4, any four psi powers of your choice at rank 3, and **a total of ten ranks** from any skills (including psi powers) of your choice.

**Veteran:** Will +2, Empathy 4, Observe 2, Profession (Specialization) 4, Resist 6, any four psi powers at rank 6, any four psi powers of your choice at rank 4, and **a total of ten ranks** from any skills (including psi powers) of your choice.

### ESPO

An ESPO is a military esper — an “extra-sensory proficient operative.” Trained both as a soldier and as a psi-user, an ESPO is a valuable ally or a dangerous foe, depending on one’s point of view. Most interstellar states have their own ESPOs, some of whom are renowned for their prowess in battle.

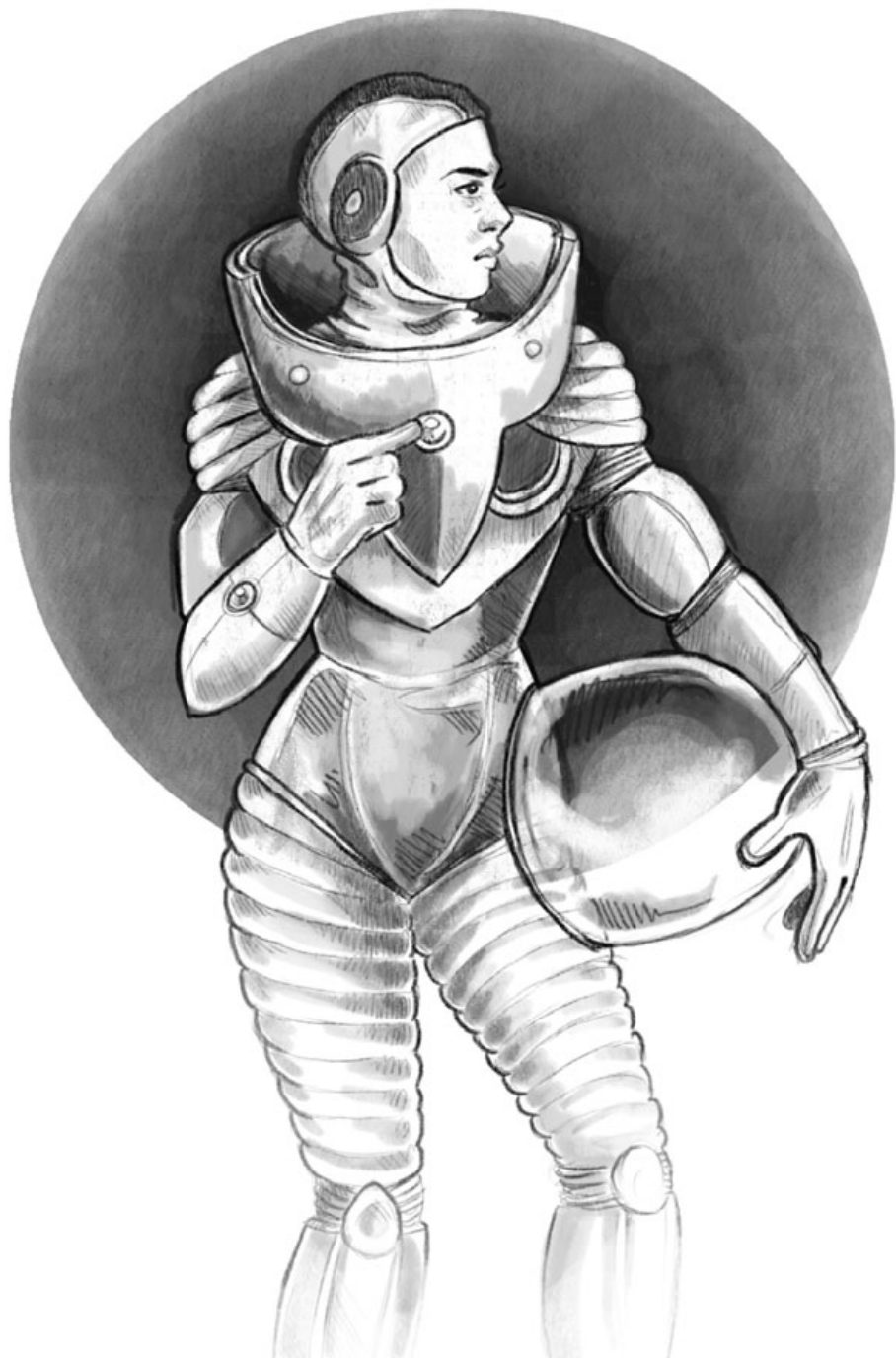
**Novice:** Will +1, Athletics 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Melee 2, Profession (ESPO) 1, Resist 2, Shoot 2, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, any three psi powers of your choice at rank 2 each.

**Experienced:** Will +1, Athletics 3, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Melee 3, Profession (ESPO) 3, Resist 4, Shoot 4, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 4, any three psi powers of your choice at rank 4 each, and **a total of three ranks** from any skills (including psi powers) of your choice.

**Veteran:** Will +1, Athletics 4, Defend 5, Dodge 6, Melee 4, Profession (ESPO) 5, Resist 6, Shoot 6, Tactics 5, Unarmed Combat 6, any three psi powers of your choice at rank 6 each, and **a total of three ranks** from any skills (including psi powers) of your choice.

#### character generation example

Because character generation involves several steps, some of which might be confusing to a newcomer to *THOUSAND SUNS*, this rulebook includes an example of the process. This example starts with *Creating a Character: Ability Scores*, p. 22, and takes the reader step by step through it all, from the distribution of ability points to the use of benefit points. A completed character is presented: *Creating a Character: Completed Character*, p. 33.



Suiting up before venturing into the vacuum of space.

# CHAPTER 5: SKILLS AND HOOKS

"You're interested in history?" Rathmore asked.

"A hobby. All spacemen have hobbies. There's very little work aboard ship in hyperspace; boredom is the worst enemy. My guns-and-missiles officer, Vann Larch, is a painter. Most of his work was lost with the *Corisande* on Durendal, but he kept us from starving a few times on Flamberge by painting pictures and selling them. My hyperspatial navigator, Guatt Kirbey, composes music; he tries to express the mathematics of hyperspatial theory in musical terms. I don't much care for it, myself," he admitted. "I study history."

—H. Beam Piper, *Space Viking* (1963)



# CHAPTER 5: SKILLS AND HOOKS

Skills in *THOUSAND SUNS* define what a character knows, whether it's shooting a blaster, speaking an alien language, hacking a computer, or piloting a starship. Most skills are broad, covering several related areas of expertise. Thus, Shoot covers all types of ranged weaponry, from slug throwers to blaster pistols, while Life Sciences covers all sciences that study living things.

**Chapter 1** (starting on p. 12) covered the basic mechanics of *THOUSAND SUNS*. This chapter goes into greater detail about how skills are used and what types of skills are available.

## SKILLS, RANKS, AND ABILITIES

All skills have ranks, a numerical value between 1 and 12 that indicates how proficient a character is in a given skill. A character with rank 1 in, say, Medical Sciences is one who might know very basic first aid procedures, while a character with rank 12 in the same skill is a healer renowned throughout the Thousand Suns.

All skills are associated with one of the five abilities described **Chapter 2** (starting on p. 20). The ability associated with each skill is noted in parentheses after each skill description later in this chapter. Adding the ranks a character has in a given skill with the score of its associated ability produces its base target number. Thus, a character with Perception 8 and Empathy 5 has a base target number of 13.

## SKILL TEST MODIFIERS

Of course, situations arise that makes a skill test easier or harder. In such cases, the Game Master can apply modifiers to adjust the base target number. Every skill listed in this book can be modified depending upon the situation in game and whether or not the GM feels a modifier is necessary. Modifiers generally range from +6, for nearly instinctive tests, to -6 for seemingly impossible ones, though individual GMs may choose to grant greater or lesser modifiers as they see fit.

So how does this work in play?

Suppose a character is trying to intimidate a group of colonists on a world in the Marches. In such a case, the GM calls for an Intimidate test with no modifiers. Suppose, however, that the character is trying to intimidate the same group of colonists with a blaster drawn, the GM might rule that the Intimidate test is easy and grants a +1 modifier to the TN. Suppose, on the other hand, that a character tries to intimidate the same group of colonists while they're being protected by a Naval Infantry garrison, in which case the GM might rule the situation Difficult and assess a -2 penalty to the test's TN.

### important reminder

When modifying the difficulty of a skill test, the modifier always applies to the Target Number, not the roll. Thus, tests that are easier than normal get *bonuses* to the TN, while tests that are harder than normal get *penalties* to the TN.

## DEGREES OF SUCCESS

More often than not, skill rolls beat a TN by one or more. For example, a character is making a Piloting test to perform a tricky maneuver in combat. The character's Dexterity is 7 and his Piloting is also 7. This gives him a TN of 14, modified by  $-3$  because the GM rules it a Challenging test. His final TN is 11. His player gets lucky and rolls 6 on 2D12, meaning he beat the TN by five points, which grants five degrees of success.

Generally, beating a TN by 1 is no different than beating it by 10. Except in combat, where the degree of success determines the damage done, the degree of success has no specific mechanical benefit. Nevertheless, the GM should often reward beating a TN by more significant amounts, as an acknowledgment that the character has performed exceptionally well. *THOUSAND SUNS* is a roleplaying game, after all, and most players take pride in their characters' accomplishments and appreciate seeing some benefit to particularly good rolls of the dice.

In the end, it is up to the Game Master to decide what an appropriate benefit should be. As a general rule, degrees of success greater than two should be rewarded with, at minimum, some small in-game effect. In the example above, perhaps the skill with which the character executed the maneuver was observed by other members of his squadron, who spread tales of his fancy flying throughout the sector, to the point where the maneuver is named for him and younger pilots look to him as an inspiration. This is but one possibility; a good GM can easily come up with many more appropriate to his campaign. The higher the degree of success, the greater the reward should be, but, by and large, such rewards should be campaign-focused rather than game mechanical in nature.

## DEGREES OF FAILURE

Just as there are degrees of success, there can also be degrees of failure: the number by which the roll misses a target number. For example, if the TN is 11 and the player rolls 14, he gained three degrees of failure. Except in a few circumstances (like opposed or extended tests), degrees of failure mean very little mechanically; failing by 10 is no different than failing by 1. However, if the GM wishes, he can assess some additional penalty to a failed roll based on its degrees of failure, so long as he uses the dramatic failure rules (p. 77) as a guideline for his assessment.

### automatic successes

Test rolls represent attempts to perform difficult actions under stressful circumstances, when failure has consequences for a character. Consequently, GMs are encouraged to avoid making players roll for everything their character does, particularly routine tasks, such as driving a vehicle to get from one place to another or using a computer to access very basic information. In such cases, the GM should assume a character simply succeeds without calling for a test roll. Not only does this approach speed up play but it also lets everyone concentrate on those aspects of the adventure that really matter.

# EXTENDED TESTS

Sometimes, the Game Master might want to simulate a time-consuming action that requires prolonged effort in order to achieve, such as assembling a robot or attempting to decipher an ancient inscription. In such cases, an ordinary test does not suffice; an extended test is needed. An extended test functions just like a normal test except that success is not achieved with a single degree. Instead, the character must achieve a larger number of degrees of success before victory, the precise number determined by the GM beforehand, based on the difficulty of the test in question.

TABLE 5–1: Extended Tests

| Difficulty  | Degrees Required | Example                           |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Routine     | 5                | Climbing a tree                   |
| Hard        | 10               | Historical research               |
| Difficult   | 15               | Deciphering a code                |
| Challenging | 20+              | Understanding Traveler technology |

Each degree of success gained adds to a tally that is compared against the chart above, while each degree of failure subtracts from it. An extended test continues until either the character succeeds by achieving the degrees needed or until the tally dips below 0, which indicates a failure.

For example, suppose a character was making an extended Life Sciences test in order to discover something unusual about the DNA of an alien species, which the GM says is Hard and thus requires 10 degrees of success. On his first roll, he achieves 3 degrees of success. On his second, he achieves 2 more, bringing his total to 5 — still 5 short of his goal. On his third roll, he fails, achieving 4 degrees of failure, which lowers his tally to 1. The player can continue to make rolls for his character until he either reaches 10 accumulated degrees of success or has less than 0, with the only limitation being time available, since extended tests, by their nature, take longer than ordinary ones.

## ASSISTED TESTS

Sometimes, one character may wish to assist another who is attempting a test. If the GM agrees that this is possible, a number of additional characters equal to the Diplomacy ranks of the character being assisted may make identical tests, provided they also possess the skill being used by the character they are assisting. If this is the case, the degrees of success (or failure) of all the characters involved are tallied and the final result is used to determine the effect of the test. If the assisted character does not possess Diplomacy, then the degrees of success achieved by assisting characters are halved, while the degrees of failure are doubled. Extended tests can be assisted.

## DRAMATIC SUCCESS

Anytime there's a roll of "2" on a 2d12, it's a *dramatic success*. The meaning of a dramatic success varies with the type of test, but typically it means that a character has not only succeeded but succeeded in a spectacular, memorable fashion, granting the character either a +2 to the TN of a future roll *directly related* to his success or penalizing an opponent with a -2

to the TN of a future roll similarly related to the success. In combat, a dramatic success also indicates that the character has dealt his opponent maximum damage for his weapon type, whereas in a skill test it indicates that the character achieved all he was attempting and more.

Here are some examples of dramatic successes:

- Through the use of Investigation, a character uncovers a clue or item that not only solves an immediate problem but also points the way toward the resolution of a more protracted one.
- By using Observe, a character realizes he is being followed and gain a +2 bonus to Initiative when those individuals following him attempt to jump him in a darkened spaceport corridor.
- A character uses Defend to avoid a punch and finds himself in an advantageous position, gaining +2 to the TN of either his next counterattack or his next attempt to use Defend against the same attacker.

## DRAMATIC FAILURE

Rolling a “24” on a 2d12 means a character experiences a *dramatic failure*. What this means is that the character not only failed his test, but he performed his action so badly that he has either placed himself in danger or otherwise adversely affected himself (and possibly his companions), penalizing the character with either a –2 to the TN of a future roll related to his failure or granting an opponent a +2 to the TN of a future roll related to the failure. In combat, a dramatic failure also indicates that a weapon suffered a jam or malfunction (in the case of high-tech weapons) or that the character has dropped or fumbled his weapon (in the case of low-tech weapons), while in a skill test it indicates that the character is either badly mistaken or has failed in such a way so as to make his situation more precarious.

Here are some examples of dramatic failures:

- While attempting to use Kriilkna sign language to negotiate with a member of the priestly caste, a character inadvertently uses the wrong sign and insults the Kriilkna’s ancestry.
- A character’s Dodge attempt fails, making him an easier target for a bounty hunter, who gains a +2 TN on his next shot at the character.
- A character misreads a combat situation while making a Tactics roll and gives faulty orders to his comrades, penalizing them with a –2 TN on their next combat rolls.

## RETRIES

Provided a failure does not have immediately negative consequences, most tasks may be attempted again. Each additional attempt lowers the target number by 1, in addition to taking more time. Thus, if a character is trying to defeat a particularly difficult electronic lock, he makes an Intrusion roll against the appropriate TN (let’s say 13, as an example). If that roll is a failure, he may try again, with the TN being 12 this time. These rules also apply to extended tests.

## UNTRAINED SKILL USE

Some skills can be used even if a character does not possess them. If a skill has the word “Untrained” after its name in the list below, it may be used even if the character does not possess it. Using a skill with that descriptor means the character takes either a –4 or –2 penalty to the TN, which is equal to the ability score associated with the skill in question, depending on how difficult the GM judges the action to be.

For example, a character is unskilled in Shoot. Surrounded by a band of Hen Jaa shock troopers, the character grabs a nearby blaster pistol, hoping to defend himself. Though untrained, the character can still try for a lucky shot, even if the odds are against him. The TN for such a test equals the character's Dexterity (the ability associated with the Shoot skill) -2, since the GM assesses it a fairly easy action.

## RANK ZERO SKILLS

Through the course of generation, some character may acquire one or more skills at rank 0. These skills represent only basic familiarity, but they have two possible benefits. For skills with the "Untrained" descriptor, rank 0 negates any penalty to the TN, allowing the character to use his associated ability score for the TN. For skills without the "Untrained" descriptor, rank 0 allows the character to attempt a test anyway, although any untrained penalty remains in effect.

## COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS

Occasionally, a test may suggest multiple skills appropriate to the test. For example, a character is attempting to impress a Kriilkna priest whose assistance he requires. The GM rules that the task requires the use of Diplomacy, but the player reasonably asks if his character's Culture (Kriilkna) might aid him in his task. If the GM agrees, he then asks the player to make a Culture (Kriilkna) test, with whatever modifiers he thinks are appropriate to the



Two Testudo-class landing craft preparing to land.

situation. If the test is successful, the player may add one-half the degrees of success of that test to the target number of his character's Diplomacy test to convince the priest. If the test is a failure, the player subtracts one-half the degrees of failure from the target number.

In cases where there is more than one complementary skill, the player may choose only one to use as a potential bonus to his TN. The choice is entirely up to him, subject to GM approval, of course, but, in general, it is usually best to choose the complementary skill with the highest target number in order to improve the chance of success and the improvement to the TN of the test it modifies. At the GM's discretion, complementary skills can be used to aid combat-related tests, but such occasions should generally be rare.

## SPECIALIZATIONS

Most of the skill descriptions below include sample options for specializations. Specializations represent areas of particular expertise, improving the character's chance of success for any test where the specialization could reasonably be said to come into play. For example, a character has Life Sciences 6, with a specialization in Botany. This is typically recorded as Life Sciences (Botany) 6, with the specialization granting either a +2 TN on tests where the specialization is pertinent or a re-roll without penalty in case of a failure. Characters may have more than one specialization of any given skill, but each one must be learned separately. Each specialization is recorded in parentheses after the base skill. Acquiring a specialization has no effect on the rank of the base skill.

As noted above, the specializations listed after each skill description below are suggestions only. They are by no means exclusive and players and GMs alike should feel free to develop other specializations based on the needs of their campaign.

## TRAINED SPECIALIZATIONS

In most cases, a character possessing a skill can attempt actions covered by any of its possible specializations. For example, a character with the Shoot skill can fire handguns, energy weapons, and gauss weapons. In a few cases, though, there are specializations that are sufficiently esoteric or narrow that a character who has not taken it can attempt those actions only with great difficulty. A good example of this is Surgery, a specialization of Medical Sciences. Unless a character has specifically taken Surgery, any tests that require Medical Sciences (Surgery) incur a -4 penalty similar to untrained skill use (see *Untrained Skill Use*, p. 77).

In the baseline rules of *THOUSAND SUNS*, there are not many trained specializations, but Game Masters should feel free to add their own to better reflect the peculiarities of their campaign settings. For example, the GM might decide that the alien strategy game of jan tar is so unlike other types of games that a character must possess a specialization of Gaming devoted to it or incur a penalty to his test.

## ACTION POINTS

One way to improve the odds of a test is through the use of action points. As noted in **Chapters 1 and 2**, action points are a kind of game mechanical "currency" useful in altering the target number of any skill roll. A player does not need to spend the action points in advance; he can do so after the fact if he wishes. For example, a character has a TN of 13 and his player rolls 14 – a failure. Since the success of the test is important to the character's survival, the player decide to spend an action point and boost the TN to 14, turning a failure into a success.

One may spend as many action points as one's character currently has to improve the TN of a test. A player may not, however, use action points to improve the TN of another character's test. To do that requires the use of hooks, as described later in this chapter, along with several other uses of action points.

Characters regain their pool of action points at the beginning of each game session. Each character starts the game with a pool of 5 action points, but additional points may be purchased to increase that pool with the expenditure of experience points (see *Spending Experience Points*, p. 192).

## SKILL LIST

Each skill entry below includes the name of the skill, its associated ability (to which skill ranks are added to determine a base Target Number), and if it can be used untrained. In addition, each entry describes the skill's scope and offers a few sample specializations (if any). Skills followed by a dagger (†) require a specialization. Each specialization is treated as a separate skill, so a character with, say, Culture (Terran) 3 cannot use his knowledge to make a test that requires Culture (Hen Jaa). Specializations followed by an asterisk (\*) indicate trained specializations.

### ACROBATICS

■ DEXTERITY

Acrobatics is the skill of performing physical feats either at a great height or under adverse conditions that affect a character's innate sense of balance.

**Specializations:** Balancing, Falling, Gymnastics\*, Tumbling, Zero-G\*

### ANIMAL HANDLING

■ PRESENCE

Animal Handling is the skill of caring for, training, and (if applicable) riding animals.

**Specializations:** Specific Animals

### ATHLETICS

■ BODY, UNTRAINED

Athletics is the skill of performing activities that depend on physical strength and endurance.

**Specializations:** Climbing, Jumping, Specific Sports, Swimming, Throwing

### BARGAIN

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Bargain is the skill of convincing others for one's own benefit, often, but not exclusively, through deception.

**Specializations:** Bluff, Bribery, Charm, Fast Talk, Seduction, Trade

### BUREAUCRACY

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Bureaucracy is the skill of understanding and manipulating organizations and power structures.

**Specializations:** Academic, Business, Government, Legal, Military

### COMPUTERS

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Computers is the skill of using computers and similar devices.

**Specializations:** Data Manipulation, Encryption, Hacking, Programming, Research, Simulation

### CULTURE

■ PERCEPTION†

Culture is the skill of knowing about the history, society, and culture of a particular species or world.

**Specializations:** Specific Cultures

### DEFEND

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Defend is the skill of avoiding melee attacks.

**Specializations:** Block, Parry.



**Chapter 8** (starting on p. 126) describes most of the weapons a character can acquire in *THOUSAND SUNS*. Each weapon includes, in addition to its other traits, an entry indicating which specialization applies to, say, a blaster pistol or a monoblade.



## DIPLOMACY

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Diplomacy is the skill of convincing others by swaying them to one's point of view.

**Specializations:** Debate, First Contact, Etiquette, Leadership, Negotiation, Persuasion

## DODGE

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Dodge is the skill of avoiding ranged attacks.

**Specializations:** None

## EMPATHY

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Empathy is the skill of reading and understanding other people's feelings and mental states.

**Specializations:** Body Language, Emotions, Intuition, Lies, Motives

## ENGINEERING

■ PERCEPTION

Engineering is the skill of building, maintaining, and modifying technological systems.

**Specializations:** D-Drive, Material, Naval Architecture, Specific Systems

## GAMING

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Gaming is the skill of playing non-physical games of strategy and chance.

**Specializations:** Specific Games

## GUNNERY

■ PERCEPTION

Gunnery is the skill of using emplaced or vehicle-mounted weaponry, including starship weaponry..

**Specializations:** Direct Fire, Energy Weapons, Indirect Fire, Missiles, Orbital Bombardment

## HEAVY WEAPONS

■ DEXTERITY

Heavy Weapons is the skill of using large, military grade weapons.

**Specializations:** Autocannon, Grenade Launcher, Flamethrower, Machine Gun, Rail Gun

## INTRUSION

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Intrusion is the skill of finding and defeating security procedures or devices designed to prevent others from entering.

**Specializations:** Electronic, Mechanical, Security Procedures

## INTIMIDATION

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Intimidation is the skill of convincing others through fear.

**Specializations:** Bluster, Interrogation, Orders, Threats, Torture

## INVESTIGATION

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Interrogation is the skill of finding clues and uncovering evidence.

**Specializations:** Criminal, Interview, Mysteries, Research, Search

## LANGUAGE

■ PERCEPTION†

Language is the skill of speaking a language other than one's own.

**Specializations:** Specific Languages

## LIFE SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Life Sciences is the skill of studying living organisms, whether plants or animals.

**Specializations:** Biology, Botany, Ecology, Genetics, Zoology

## MEDICAL SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Medical Sciences is the skill of diagnosing and treating physical ailments.

**Specializations:** Diagnosis, First Aid, General Medicine, Pathology, Pharmacology, Surgery\*

## MELEE

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Melee is the skill of fighting with a weapon.

**Specializations:** Axe, Fencing, Long Blade, Short Blade, Traditional

## OBSERVE

■ PERCEPTION, UNTRAINED

Observe is the skill of being aware of one's surroundings and noticing small details.

**Specializations:** Combat Awareness\*, Keen Eyesight, Keen Hearing, Keen Smell, Spot Hidden.

## PERFORMANCE

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Performance is the skill of entertaining people.

**Specializations:** Acting, Dancing, Disguise, Oratory, Singing, Specific Musical Instrument

## PHYSICAL SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Physical Sciences is the skill of studying the physical universe and its properties.

**Specializations:** Chemistry, Computer Science, Geology, Mathematics, Physics

## PILOTING

■ DEXTERITY

Piloting is the skill of controlling space vehicles, regardless of whether they possess a D-Drive.

**Specializations:** By class

## PROFESSION

■ PERCEPTION†

Profession is the skill of being knowledgeable about a particular career or vocation.

**Specializations:** Specific Professions

## RESIST

■ WILL, UNTRAINED

Resist is the skill of resisting mental or physical coercion of all types.

**Specializations:** Resist Illness, Resist Interrogation, Resist Pain, Resist Psi.

## SHOOT

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Shoot is the skill of fighting with a ranged weapon.

**Specializations:** Energy Pistol (EP), Energy Rifle (ER), Handgun (H), Shotgun (Sh), Rifle (R), Sonic (S),

## SOCIALIZE

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Socialize is the skill of interacting positively with other people in a social situation.

**Specializations:** Carousing, Formal Events, State Dinners,

## SOCIAL SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Social Sciences is the skill of studying various aspects of sapient society and culture.

**Specializations:** Anthropology, Archeology, History, Philosophy, Theology

## SPACE SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Space Sciences is the skill of studying extraterrestrial phenomena and their properties.

**Specializations:** Astrogation, Astrography, Astronomy, Astrophysics, Jump Theory

## STEALTH

■ DEXTERITY, UNTRAINED

Stealth is the skill of hiding oneself and moving without being seen.

**Specializations:** Ambush, Camouflage, Hiding, Shadowing, Sneaking

## STREETWISE

■ PRESENCE, UNTRAINED

Streetwise is the skill of being able to interact with individuals engaged in illegal and quasi-legal activities.

**Specializations:** Contacts, Contraband, Scrounging

## SUBTERFUGE

■ PERCEPTION

Subterfuge is the skill of using one's hands to engage in illicit activities.

**Specializations:** Forgery, Pick Pocket, Sleight of Hand

## SURVIVAL

■ PERCEPTION

Survival is the skill of being able to survive in the wild.

**Specializations:** Arctic, Desert, Jungle, Ocean, Specific Planet

## TACTICS

■ PERCEPTION

Tactics is the skill of organizing and planning a military operation.

**Specializations:** Defense, Guerrilla Warfare, Mechanized, Small Unit, Starship

## TECHNICAL SCIENCES

■ PERCEPTION

Technical Sciences is the skill of using, building, and repairing technological devices.

**Specializations:** Demolitions, Cybernetics, Electronics, Mechanics, Robotics, Specific Technical Systems

## UNARMED COMBAT

■ DEX, UNTRAINED

Unarmed Combat is the skill of fighting without weapons.

**Specializations:** Blind Fighting, Boxing, Brawling, Martial Arts, Wrestling, Zero-G Fighting\*

## VEHICLE OPERATION

■ DEX, UNTRAINED

Vehicle Operation is the skill of driving a powered vehicle.

**Specializations:** Atmospheric\*, Close Orbital\*, Grav, Ground, Water

# HOOKS

**Chapter 2** introduced the concept of hooks. New characters begin with five hooks. Hooks are special attributes describing important elements of the character's personality, background, or relationship to the world around him. They are shorthand ways of painting a detailed picture of the character, aiding both the player and the GM in not only portraying the character and how others relate to him but also in specifying what the player considers most important about his character. Hooks are thus a tool for both the player and the Game Master.

Hooks are also the best way by which players can spend action points to give their characters an edge in the course of an adventure.

## CHOOSING HOOKS

Hooks, by definition are non-standard. There is no grand list of them that players can look at and select from, although many examples of hooks are included throughout this rulebook. Each character and, therefore, each *THOUSAND SUNS* campaign has its own unique list of hooks. What constitutes an acceptable hook is entirely up to the GM, but GMs are encouraged to be very lenient in allowing players to create their characters' hooks. The primary way of knowing if a hook is an acceptable one is if it makes not just the character but the wider campaign more interesting. If it does, there is usually little harm in allowing a player to have the hook he desires.

Players should nevertheless take great care in choosing their characters' hooks, since they, in many ways, define their character far more than their abilities and skills. Hooks highlight the things a player thinks are important about their character and tell the GM the kinds of elements they would like to see in adventures involving their character. If a player chooses "On the run from the Black Hole Gang" as a hook, chances are he wants to have this vicious band of space pirates appear as recurring villains in the campaign.

The skill list included in this chapter is by no means exhaustive nor is it intended to be. Players and GMs alike can no doubt imagine many narrow skills that have no obvious analogs among those described here. Good examples are skills covering many forms of artistic expression (painting, etc.) and very specific types of knowledge. New skills can easily be created to cover such abilities, but a simpler solution might be to treat these skills as hooks. Rather than creating a new “Art” skill, the GM might recommend that a player take “Likes to paint in his spare time” as a hook for his character. Rather than creating a new “Trivia” skill, a hook called “Ancient Military History Buff” might work just as well. After all, hooks are intended primarily as roleplaying tools and many of the narrowly focused skills not included in this chapter primarily serve to flesh him out for the purposes of roleplaying.

## “BAD” HOOKS

There is no requirement that hook be “good” or otherwise positive. Indeed, some of the best hooks are ones some might consider negative. That may seem counter-intuitive but it is not. Remember why hooks exist and what they do. First and foremost, they define a character and tell a GM about the kinds of things the player of that character finds interesting. Secondly, a hook provides an occasion to spend action points. So, if a player chooses the seemingly negative “Suspicious of non-Terrans” as a hook, it is as much a blessing as a curse. The hook can be called upon to alert the character to treachery by aliens and even human clades but it’ll just as often earn him enemies and land him in trouble throughout the campaign — which is actually a good thing! It’s the stuff of memorable adventures and, just as importantly, it provides opportunities for the player to spend action points where appropriate.

## USING HOOKS

Either the player or the Game Master can bring a hook into play. A player brings a hook into play whenever he feels it is relevant (even after a test is rolled) and, if the GM agrees, he can spend an action point to gain a bonus relating to his hook. The GM brings a hook into play whenever he feels it is relevant and the player gains a free action point that he can either use immediately (if the situation the GM has created through the use of the hook warrants it) or that he can save it for later use, either with this particular hook or another one. Action points gained through the GM’s bringing a hook into play are temporary and are thus *not* regained at the start of the next session if spent.

Hooks can be used whenever either the Game Master or the player (with the concurrence of the GM) believes they are appropriate to the current situation. As with the creation of hooks, it is recommended that GMs be very lenient in judging relevance in this context. After all, hooks are intended to be used rather than sidestepped and they lose much of their purpose if the GM allows their use only in a very narrowly defined set of circumstances.

As noted in **Chapter 2 (see p. 27)**, bringing a hook into play gives action points greater utility, namely:

- +2 bonus to any target
- Re-roll any failed test

There is theoretically no restriction on how many hooks (and thus how many action points) may be used in a given circumstances, but no hook may be used more than once for the same situation.

## A FINAL WORD ON HOOKS AND ACTION POINTS

Hooks and action points are meta-game elements, which is to say, they represent a rare example where the player (or the GM) rather than the character (or the dice) influences the game world of *THOUSAND SUNS*. Generally speaking, the outcome of events in the game is the result of the interaction between a character's abilities and skills and the GM's adventure, with the additional random element that dice rolls bring. Certain things thus happen in the game independent of both the player and GM's desires and part of the fun of a roleplaying game is being surprised at how things unfold. Everyone playing is as much a watcher of the game as a participant in it.

Hooks and action points, though, give everyone the limited ability to push the game this way or that, to influence dice rolls so that certain tests have a greater chance to turn out well at the moment when the player or GM wishes them to do so. *THOUSAND SUNS* is a game that includes plenty of random elements, but there is more to roleplaying than letting the dice fall where they may and reacting accordingly. Very few people enjoy feeling as if they are always impotent flotsam on the waves of fate, particularly in a form of entertainment like roleplaying. That's why hooks and action points exist: as a vehicle for letting players and GMs alike better tailor their adventures to their wishes. So long as these meta-game elements are viewed in this light, they can add greatly to the fun and excitement of the campaign.



On many worlds, dueling is an accepted form of conflict resolution . . .

# CHAPTER 6: ACTION

*Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.*  
— Isaac Asimov, "Bridle and Saddle" (1942)



# CHAPTER 6: ACTION

## PERSONAL COMBAT

Despite the fondest hopes of many dreamers, traveling to the stars has not altered the fact that Terrans – and most of the alien species they have encountered – sometimes resort to violence to solve their problems when other avenues fail or prove too difficult. Consequently, *THOUSAND SUNS* includes a personal combat system to handle everything from brawls in seedy starport bars to running blaster battles between enemy forces. Like everything else in the game, personal combat is intended to be fast and easy to use, providing just enough detail to adjudicate these tense, dramatic situations without bogging down in minutiae. Because the system is fairly simple, it is easy to add or subtract complications to suit a preferred style of play.

### TIME

Personal combat is divided into units of measurement called rounds. A round is an imprecise and somewhat arbitrary unit that describes the length of time it takes a character to complete all of his actions. In real time, this corresponds to somewhere between three and six seconds on average, though a round could be shorter and longer, depending on the wishes of the Game Master.

### MOVEMENT

Normally, a Terran or similarly sized character can move up to 10 meters per round. If a character wishes to move more than that, he must make a successful Athletics test. For each degree of success, he may move an additional meter per round. A character carrying more than his Body rank allows (see *Moving Objects*, p. 103), suffers a penalty of 3 m per round for each line on Table 6–5 by which they exceeds the one appropriate to his Body rank. For example, a character with 7 Body can move 10 m per round while carrying 50 kg, while one carrying 65 kg (one line higher on the Table 6–5) can move only 7 m per round.

#### the international system of units

*THOUSAND SUNS* uses measurements (meters, kilometers, kilograms, etc.) throughout the rulebook that are part of the International System of Units, commonly known as the Metric System. This was done primarily for flavor purposes, as science fiction generally uses such measurements.

### SURPRISE

Circumstances might allow a character to surprise another character. Doing so grants him a free round of action before the surprised character is able to react. Whether surprise is achieved is generally decided by the Game Master, taking into account such factors as planning, alertness, etc. Often, an opposed test, such as Stealth versus Observe can be helpful in determining if surprised has been achieved.

## initiative modifiers

Initiative Rating can be modified by any number of factors, as determined by the GM. Characters wandering into an ambush might rightly receive a penalty to their Initiative Ratings, while those laying a trap for their opponents might receive a bonus. Likewise, previous combat experience might modify Initiative Ratings as well. If the GM chooses, he may grant a bonus of +1 per level in a military Career Package. Thus, someone who is a Novice soldier receives +1, while someone who is a Veteran receives +3. These bonuses are entirely optional and some GMs may not wish to grant them, as they give a certain edge to characters who spent time in the military.

## INITIATIVE

Which character gets to act first in a round is partly determined by his Initiative Rank (see *Initiative Rank*, p. 22). This rating is determined by the following formula:

$$1D12 + \text{Initiative Rank} +/- \text{modifiers} = \text{Initiative Rating}$$

Actions proceed throughout a round based on Initiative Rating, highest to lowest. In the case of ties, highest (Dexterity + Perception/2) acts first. Once initiative order is determined, it remains fixed until the combat is completed. The only exception is a character choosing to delay acting in a round until later than his Initiative Rating would normally warrant. Doing so, his Initiative Rating drops to the new, lower rating and stays there until the combat ends.

Initiative is determined either on an individual or “per side” basis. What this means is that the GM has every character, including NPCs, roll individually for their Initiative Rating or he can designate a single character per side in the conflict whose Initiative Rating is used to determine who acts when. Typically, the character with the highest Tactics skill is the best person to designate for this task, but players should feel free to offer alternative suggestions. In general, individual initiative works best when there are smaller numbers of combatants, while per side initiative works best for large fights between many opponents.

## TACTICS

The Tactics skill has an additional use in combat. At the beginning of each combat round, the character with the highest Tactics skill (or the one designated as the “leader,” which is to say, the one directing the actions of the other members of his team) may take a Tactics test. That character divides the degrees of success (if any) among the characters as bonuses to any test during that round provided that the characters in question are in communication with him (whether by voice or through a technological device). This represents the leader’s direction

## a note about actions

Characters can Dodge or Defend any attack on or after their Initiative Rating, subject to the multiple action penalty. For example, a character with Dexterity 7 and Perception 7 rolls a 4, resulting in an Initiative rating of 11. Prior to his turn, the character can neither Dodge nor Defend. At the count of 11, his player can declare his actions, including any Dodges or Defends, applying the cumulative TN–2 multiple action penalty. If the character is later attacked, say on the count of 6, the GM counts the total number of actions the character has taken in the current round and apply another TN–2 if his player decides to undertake further attempts to Dodge or Defend.

of the combat through his command of tactics. The character who made the Tactics test may distribute up to half his total degrees of success to any one other character for use in a test that round. A Tactics test does not count as a combat action and thus does not count toward multi-action penalties in a round.

## ACTIONS

An action is whatever a character chooses to do in a round. Normally, a character has only one action per round. If he wishes to attempt more than one action per round, he must suffer a multiple action penalty, described on the next page.

### MULTIPLE ACTIONS

A character choosing to attempt more than one action per round suffers a penalty, the severity of which is determined by how many additional actions he attempts. For each additional action beyond the first, a character suffers a -2 TN penalty to every action he takes that round. Consequently, if a character attempts three actions in a single round, he suffers a -4 TN to all three of his actions, including the first one he would normally get without penalty.

## RANGE

*THOUSAND SUNS* uses a simple system of ranges, dividing distance into categories: point blank, short, medium, and long. Individual weapons include range listing that follow this same pattern, allowing players to know when firing a blaster pistol incurs a bonus or a penalty due to range.

**TABLE 6-1: Range Modifiers**

| Range       | Modifier |
|-------------|----------|
| Long        | -4       |
| Medium      | -2       |
| Short       | +0       |
| Point Blank | +1       |

## PERSONAL COMBAT BASICS

The actual sequence of personal combat, whether melee or ranged, is straightforward and proceeds in this fashion:

### 1. Choose the Right Skill

For firing ranged weapons: use Shoot.

For hand-to-hand combat: use Unarmed Combat.

For armed combat: use Melee.

### 2. Roll 2d12

If the result is less than or equal to the target number (including any modifiers), a character scores a hit.

### 3. Determine Damage

Take note of the degrees of success in the roll to hit. Multiply it by the weapon's base damage to determine the Vitality damage dealt.



... not to mention a popular spectator sport.

## ADDITIONAL MODIFIERS

There are additional complications that affect this sequence, such as armor, avoiding attacks through dodging, and other modifiers.

### AREA ATTACKS

Some weapons deal damage to an entire area rather than a specific target. Examples include grenades and explosives. If the attacker successfully hits the area he wishes (by making an appropriate test, modified by range and other factors), all targets in the area of effect of the attack must make Dodge test (see *Dodge*, p. 102). If successful, they may deduct the degrees of success of their Test from the degrees of success of the attacker to determine damage. However, each character that dodges deducts his own degrees of success, meaning that multiple characters within an area attack's effect may take different amounts of damage, depending on how well they managed to dodge.

### CALLED SHOTS

A called shot is an attempt to hit a specific area on a target. Because this is harder to do than a normal shot, a called shot suffers a penalty. Penalties ranged from -1 to -4, depending on size, speed, and other factors pertaining to the target, as assessed by the GM. Called shots are most often used when trying to hit a particular part of an opponent's body. In such cases, the GM should use the following table:

**TABLE 6-2: Hit Locations**

| Target's Body Part    | TN Modifier | Effect  |
|-----------------------|-------------|---|
| Abdomen               | -2          | +2 degrees of success for determining damage        |
| Arm (Left/Right)      | -3          | Successful Resist test at -2 or drop any held items |
| Chest                 | -2          | None  |
| Head                  | -4          | +3 degrees of success for determining damage        |
| Leg                   | -3          | Movement reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$                   |
| Shoulder (Left/Right) | -3          | Successful Resist test at -1 or drop any held items |
| Thighs                | -2          | Movement reduced by $\frac{1}{2}$                   |

### CAREFUL AIM

When making a ranged attack, a player may declare his character is taking careful aim. In this case, the character spends one entire round aiming, during which time he may neither attack nor defend. On his next action, he receives a +1 TN bonus to his attack (+2 TN if the weapon has a scope). If anything interrupts the character while undertaking careful aim, his concentration is disrupted and he loses the TN bonus on his next attack.

### COVER

The easiest way to avoid being hit in combat is to seek protective cover. Cover is any type of physical barrier that stands between a character's body and his opponent. Cover comes in three varieties: Full, Partial, and Prone.

### FULL COVER (–3 TN)

Full cover completely protects a character, making him extremely hard to hit. Examples of Full Cover would be firing from inside a building through a window, in between dense trees, or crouched behind a large rock.

### PARTIAL COVER (–2 TN)

Partial cover provides more limited protection to a character. Hiding in tall grass or shooting from behind a tree are examples of partial cover.

### PRONE (–1 TN)

Prone describes a character when he drops to the ground in an attempt to avoid being hit. Prone is considered a form of cover because not only is his field of vision altered, but he is much harder to hit because he is not a target standing up on the field of battle. Alternately, a character who is immobilized or otherwise unable to act is much easier to hit, granting a +3 TN to anyone firing on them. Likewise, fighting from a prone position incurs a –4 TN penalty on all combat tests.

**TABLE 6–3: Additional Combat Modifiers**

| Condition                    | Modifier |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Shooting weapon off-handed   | –2       |
| Shooting while walking       | –1       |
| Shooting while running       | –2       |
| Shooting from moving vehicle | –2       |

### DARKNESS

Another form of combat modifier is visual impairment that can be caused by darkness, light of varying intensities, and smoke or fog. Not being able to see one's opponent makes it harder to hit them in combat. Darkness and other visual impairments incur the following TN penalties to both the attacker and the defender.

**TABLE 6–4: Darkness and Light**

| Condition        | Modifier |
|------------------|----------|
| Full Darkness    | –3       |
| Partial Darkness | –2       |
| Dim Light        | –1       |
| Weak Light       | –1       |
| Smoky/Hazy       | –1       |
| Bright Light     | –2       |
| Blinding Light   | –3       |

The term “darkness” need not be taken literally in every case. Other effects that mimic darkness or have similar consequences merit the same combat penalties. Such examples would include being blindfolded, blinded, or otherwise visually impaired.

Combat in *THOUSAND SUNS* can be fast and deadly, but some Game Masters may wish to add a further layer of lethality to it. In such a case, shock rules can be used to represent the possibility of a character's becoming suddenly incapacitated by an attack. Under this option, any time a character takes more damage from a single attack than the sum of his Body + Will, he must make a Will Test or be overcome with shock. A shocked character is incapacitated and incapable of doing anything, including defending himself, for a number of rounds equal to the degrees by which he failed his Will test.

## SIZE

The relative size of the target of an attack affects the difficulty of hitting it in combat. For every doubling of a target's size compared to that of the attacker, grant a +1 TN bonus. Contrariwise, for every halving of a target's size compared to that of the attacker, impose a -1 TN penalty.

## TWO WEAPONS

Some characters may attempt to use two hand-held weapons at the same time. This sort of action is possible but it is extremely difficult, even for the most well trained combatants. In addition to suffering the usual penalty for taking two Actions in a Round (-2 TN per attack), the character suffers an additional -2 TN to each attack, for a grand total of -4 TN per attack. Furthermore, unless a character has been established as being ambidextrous (through a Hook, for example), the off-handed weapon penalty also applies to the second attack, bringing it to a -6 TN penalty.

Species with more than two arms may not suffer the full effects of this modifier. See **Chapter 12** (*Extra Arms*, p. 224) for more details.

## ZERO-G

All actions performed under zero gravity conditions suffer a -2 TN penalty unless the character makes a successful Acrobatics (Zero-G) test.

## AUTOMATIC FIRE

Automatic weapons have a few special rules governing their use that warrant special mention. Firstly, for the purposes of this discussion, an automatic weapon is any weapon that can fire multiple shots during a single action. Because automatic weapons fire multiple shots, they are harder to dodge than normal attacks. When a single target is making a Dodge test against an automatic weapon, the degrees of success are halved. For example, a Naval Infantry trooper opens fire with an automatic rifle. His target attempts to dodge and achieves 4 degrees of success on his Test. For the purposes of lessening the damage dealt by the automatic rifle, the target is treated as having achieved only 2 degrees of success.

## MULTIPLE TARGETS

The above rules apply only to automatic weapons fire against a single target. One of the advantages of such weapons is that they can easily be used to attack multiple targets in a single round by spraying adjacent areas with fire. A character may attempt to attack a number of adjacent 2-meter squares equal to his Shoot skill. The character suffers a penalty to his Shoot test equal to the number of squares he wishes to spray with automatic weapons fire. Thus, if he wishes to spray three 2-meter squares, his Shoot Test is at TN -3. However, the character may freely make a number of Shoot tests equal to the number of targets within the squares he is spraying. Each attack is resolved individually and the success or failure of each individual attack has no



bearing on the others. Damage is thus determined separately for each target and Dodge tests are resolved normally rather than according to the rules for single target automatic weapons fire.

## COVERING FIRE

Automatic weapons can be used to give an ally cover from attacks by making it harder for an opponent to target him. To use covering fire, a character must choose one ally and one opponent, both of whom must be in line of sight. By using his action in a round doing nothing but spraying the area around the opponent with fire, he grants the ally a +3 TN bonus to any Dodge tests to avoid attacks from the opponent whom the character is targeting. Multiple characters providing covering fire adds no additional benefit. While using covering fire, a character can take no other actions. Covering fire may not be used to provide cover for an ally in melee combat.

## SUPPRESSION FIRE

Suppression fire is the reverse of covering fire, making it harder for an opponent to hit an ally by spraying the area with automatic weapons fire. The same rules apply for suppression fire as for covering fire, except that instead of granting a Dodge test bonus, the character imposes a -3 TN penalty to an opponent's Shoot Tests against an ally.

## UNARMED COMBAT ACTIONS

In addition to basic actions like punches, strikes, kicks, and blocks characters engaged in unarmed combat may also attempt other more complex actions, some of which are described below. GMs are advised to apply common sense when these actions are employed. For example, the effectiveness of using a choke hold on a well-armored defender or a Czanik would be minimal.

### FEINT

With this action, the attacker attempts to deceive the defender as to his intentions. An opposed Unarmed Combat test is performed; if the attacker succeeds, he can use the number of successes earned in the next round as a bonus to his own Unarmed Combat test. If the defender ties or beats the attackers role, the feint fails. Characters without Unarmed Combat defend using Perception instead.

### GRAPPLE

This action is an attempt by the attacker to gain hold of the defender. An opposed test is performed using either Body or Dexterity; each player gets to specify which ability his character uses. This represents the use of either raw strength or effective body control to attempt a grapple or resist it. The character with the most successes is in control of the situation. Breaking a grapple requires a successful opposed test using either Body (applied strength) or Dexterity (wriggling free). Whether or not a grappled character can effectively do anything but try and break free is largely situation-dependent and probably carries a penalty. For example, a grappled character trying to kick the control for a door to get it open might suffer a -4 TN penalty. In instances where an Unarmed Combat technique is sufficiently well defined, (for example Judo) then that skill replaces Body or Dexterity for purposes of making tests.

### TAKEDOWN

A takedown is a modified form of grapple where the attacker is attempting to force the defender prone. If the attacker succeeds, he has the option of maintaining the grapple on the prone defender, resulting in his also being prone, or may remain standing, thereby releasing the grapple.



A starship crew defends itself against pirates.

## CHOKE HOLD

To effect a choke hold requires a successful grapple with a  $-2$  TN penalty to the test. If the choke hold is maintained for an uninterrupted number of rounds equal to the defender's Body ability, he falls unconscious.

## SPIN KICK

This style of kick uses increased momentum to inflict more damage but it comes at the cost of reduced tactical flexibility. A successful spin kick nets the attacker an additional two points of damage but only if he succeeds at the Unarmed Combat test. Additionally, the multiple action penalty of any further actions performed during the round is increased by one. For example, if the attacker wants to dodge a subsequent attack, he suffers a  $-3$  TN multiple action penalty instead of the usual  $-2$  (see *Multiple Actions*, p. 90).

## JUMP KICK

A jump kick operates much like a spin kick and, while potentially more damaging, also carry a higher tactical cost. A successful jump kick nets the attacker an additional three points of damage as long as he succeeds at the Unarmed Combat test. The multiple action penalty of any further actions during the round is increased by two and, in addition, the attacker must succeed at an Acrobatics (or Dexterity) test or fall prone.

## SWEEP KICK

This action is an attempt to knock the feet out from under a defender. The attacker performs an Unarmed Combat test at  $-2$  TN; the defender opposes that test using Unarmed Combat (blocking the kick), Dexterity (evading the kick) or Body (absorbing the kick). If the attacker succeeds, the defender is knocked prone.

## RISING FROM A PRONE POSITION

An unimpeded character may rise from a prone position but gets no further actions that round. A character attempting to rise from a prone position while being assaulted must make a successful Acrobatics or Dexterity test to do so; failure results in the character remaining prone.

## KIP UP

A prone character may use Acrobatics to try and regain his feet. If successful, all subsequent actions during that round incur the usual penalty (see *Multiple Actions*, p. 90).

# DAMAGE

Attacks that both succeed and are not avoided (see *Avoiding Attacks*, p. 102) inflict damage on their target. Taking damage makes it harder for a character to perform Actions, including those relating to combat. When a character takes damage equal to one-fifth of his total Vitality, he suffers a  $-1$  TN to all tasks until healed. This penalty increases by an additional  $-1$  TN for each additional one-fifth of his total Vitality he takes in damage. Thus a character who has 50 total Vitality suffers a  $-1$  TN penalty when he drops to 40 Vitality, a  $-2$  TN when he drops to 30 Vitality, and so on.

When a character is reduced to 0 or less Vitality, he is unconscious and dies in a number of rounds equal to his Body rank unless he receives medical attention. A successful Medical Sciences test is sufficient to stabilize a wounded character for one hour and prevent his immediate death. However, if he does not receive such attention, another Medical Sciences Test must be made each hour thereafter. Failure results in death.

## UNARMED AND MELEE COMBAT DAMAGE

Like all damage, unarmed combat damage is dealt by reference to the degrees of success of the attack that dealt it. The base damage of unarmed combat is  $\frac{1}{2}$  the degrees of success achieved, modified by the attacker's Unarmed Combat skill rank. For example, a character punches a security guard and achieves 4 degrees of success. Multiplied by an unarmed combat's base damage of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , the character achieves 2 points of damage, to which he adds his Unarmed Combat Rank of 7, for a total of 9 points of unarmed combat damage.

Melee weapons function very similarly, dealing damage based on the degree of success achieved by the attacker using them, they add to the result the attacker's Melee skill rank as well. For example, a character attacks a Kriilkna marauder with a memory knife, achieving four degrees of success. A memory knife's base damage is 2, meaning the character deals 8 points of Vitality damage. To this number he adds his ranks in Melee combat, in this case 6, meaning that he deals a total of 14 points of damage to the marauder.

At the Game Master's option, Unarmed or Melee attacks that rely primarily on brute force rather than finesse, such a boxing-style punches or axe blows, add the Body score of the attacker instead of the appropriate skill rank, *if it is higher*. For example, a character is in a barroom brawl and picks up a stool to smash over the head of his opponent. The GM rules that the damage such an improvised weapon deals is more a function of the character's strength in wielding it than any skill, so the character may add his Body score of 9 to the damage, since it exceeds his 6 ranks in Melee.

## RANGED COMBAT DAMAGE

Ranged combat deals damage according to the base damage of the weapon and the degrees of success achieved while attacking with it. For example, a character shoots a blaster pistol at a Hen Jaa soldier and achieves two degrees of success. A blaster pistol has a base damage of 5, so the character deals 10 points of ranged combat damage.

## DRAMATIC SUCCESSES AND MAXIMUM DAMAGE

Most weapons have a maximum damage listed in their description. This means that, no matter how many degrees of success a character achieves, they can never deal more than the maximum damage for the weapon type. Attack rolls that achieve a Dramatic Success (sometimes called a

### zero degrees of success

So what happens when a character rolls the same as his target number in combat? That's zero degrees of success, so does it mean his weapon deals no damage? No, rolling exactly the target number is treated as 1 degree of success for damage purposes, though, at the GM's discretion, achieving such a result could have other effects, such as another chance to achieve a Dramatic Success. Because the probability of achieving zero degrees of success shifts as the character improves his abilities and skills, no special effects are assumed in the default rules, but individual GMs should feel free to treat such differently, if they so choose.

“critical hit”) automatically do maximum damage. This maximum is absolute; nothing allows a character who achieves a Dramatic Success to do more damage with the weapon in question than the maximum listed under the weapon description. This applies to all weapons without exception.

## HEALING

Vitality damage can be healed except in extremely unusual cases. After a rest of at least an hour, followed by a successful test of a character's Body + Will allows him to recover a number of Vitality points equal to the degrees of success of the test. A successful Medical Sciences test also heals a number of Vitality points equal to the degrees of success of the test, if a character is resting while it is administered. For example, a character achieves 3 degrees of success while resting under the care of another character administering first aid. The other character's Medical Sciences test achieved 5 degrees of success, meaning that the wounded character heals 8 points of Vitality during that one-hour period.

After this initial treatment, a character regains Vitality at a rate equal to his Body + Will per day until fully healed. Advanced medical technology may increase the rate of healing, of course. Details of medical technology can be found in **Chapter 8** (see *Medical Equipment*, p. 137).

## OTHER TYPES OF DAMAGE

Characters can suffer damage in *THOUSAND SUNS* from hazards other than weapons and fisticuffs. A few of the most common of these damage-dealing hazards are described below.

### DISEASES AND AILMENTS

Although many worlds among the Thousand Suns possess biochemistries completely incompatible with those of Terrans, this is not universally true. For that reason, diseases and other ailments can and do arise and spread from world to world. Likewise, many ancient Terran diseases still exist and take their toll as they have for untold millennia.

When faced with the potential to contract a disease, a character must make a Body + Resist test. If he fails this test, he becomes sick with the ailment and, unless otherwise noted, stricken with the disease until it either runs its course or is cured. If the player rolls a

#### sample diseases

There are simply too many diseases catalogued on the worlds of the Thousand Suns to list them all, but here are a few samples to give the GM an idea of how to create diseases for use in his own campaign:

**Malsano:** This common ailment arose on an unknown world and has now become widespread among the Terran population. Marked by fever and chills, Malsano is more of an annoyance than a serious danger, particularly where advanced medical care is available. If a character contracts Malsano, roll 1D12 to see how many days the disease lasts. While suffering from it, the character suffers a -1 penalty to all Body-related tests until cured.

**Nikandro's Disease:** This unpleasant disease named after its discoverer, Nikandro's Disease reduces a character's Body by 4 and his Vitality by 20. It takes 2D12 days for the disease to run its course.

**Pranijja:** This disease only afflicts Czanik; Terrans and human clades are immune, as are most other known species. If contracted, the Czanik suffers from extreme fatigue for 1D12 days. While suffering from it, the Czanik suffers a -2 penalty to all Body and Dexterity-related tests.

Dramatic Success on his character's Body test, he is cured the next day of all ill effects associated with the disease and becomes immune to that disease. A Dramatic Failure doubles the effects of the disease, including its duration, and makes the character more susceptible to it if ever exposed to it again (–2 TN to future Body + Resist tests against it).

## DROWNING

Characters can hold their breath underwater for a number of rounds equal to their Body. Every round after that, they must make a Body Test. A failure results in 1D12 points of Vitality damage every round thereafter until either the character is dead or he is able to breathe again.

## FALLING

Every 20 meters fallen from a height (or fraction thereof) causes 1D12 damage under standard gravity. Damage is increased or decreased based on local gravity's difference from standard. Thus, a world with gravity of 2G would do double damage per 20 meters fallen, while one with 0.5 G would do half damage.

## FIRE AND SMOKE DAMAGE

Fire, like that of a small campfire, causes 4 points of damage per round until it is put out. Larger fires deal double that amount of damage with each doubling of size. Fire also causes smoke, which obstructs vision, as well as makes it difficult to breathe. Breathing in smoke, without the protection of any equipment, causes a character to lose one point of Vitality per round until the smoke clears.

## POISON

There are many substances, both natural and artificial, that are poisonous to Terrans and their allies and enemies among the Thousand Suns. Poisons function mechanically very similarly to diseases, except that not all poisons offer a Body + Resist test to resist their effects. A Dramatic Success, however, does not result in future immunity to the poison (except in rare cases, as noted by the GM).

## RADIATION

Radiation can be exceedingly lethal in large doses, leading either to immediate or lingering death. Most commonly encountered forms of "normal" radiation deal 1D12 points of

### sample poisons

Here are a couple sample poisons to use as models in creating others:

**Kolerego:** Favored by Myrmidon assassins, this is a particularly deadly poison. Once in a character's bloodstream, he loses 1 point of Body per hour until the ability reaches 0 and the character dies. There is no chance to resist the effects of this poison but antidotes exist.

**Veneno:** Extracted from a plant on several Kriilkna worlds, veneno is a virulent poison. Exposure to it demands a Body + Resist test. Failure results in extended unconsciousness (for 1D12 days), during which time the character loses 1 point of Body each day *permanently*. Though few people die of veneno poisoning, most suffer significant ill effects for the rest of their lives.





A telekinetic shield can come in handy.



Vitality damage every two rounds while exposed and an additional 1 point of damage every day thereafter until cured. Harder forms of radiation might deal temporary or permanent damage to abilities both during exposure and afterwards.

## VACUUM

A character exposed to vacuum without protection dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Body.

## AVOIDING ATTACKS

Characters can attempt to avoid incoming attacks if they so choose. There are several ways they can do this, depending on the type of attacking they wish to avoid.

### DODGE

Ranged attacks can be dodged with a successful Dodge test. Making a Dodge test counts as an action. If the Dodge test is successful, the player may deduct the degrees of success achieved on his character's Dodge test from the opponent's degrees of success on his attack. If this reduces the opponent's degrees of success to 0 or less, the character has completely dodged the attack and take no damage whatsoever. If a character wants to Dodge more than one ranged attack, he can expend more actions, provided he is willing to accept the multiple action penalty described above.

### DEFEND

This skill allows a character to avoid a melee attack, whether armed or not. Like all other skills, when a character defends, it counts as one action. Making a successful Defend test means that a character deducts the degrees of success achieved on his Defend test from his opponent's degrees of success on his attack. If this reduces an opponent's degrees of success to 0 or less, the character has completely defended against the attack and take no damage whatsoever. If a character wants to Defend against more than one melee attack, his player can expend more actions, provided he is willing to accept the multiple action penalty described above.

## ARMOR

Wearing armor is another effective means to defend oneself against damage. All armor (described in **Chapter 8**, see *Armor and Defenses*, p. 126) has an Armor Value (AV). Deduct the AV from any damage rolled against a character to determine how much damage he actually takes from an attack. For example, if a character is wearing armor with an AV of 10 and he is hit by an attack dealing 20 points of Vitality damage, the character only suffers 10 points of damage. This deduction is from the final damage score, after Defend or Dodge effects have been taken into account. There are a few minor exceptions to this rule. Some types of armor are only affective against certain types of attacks, for example. Such exceptions are noted in the armor's description.

## MOVING OBJECTS

How much a character can move, whether by carrying, lifting, or pushing is a function of his Body score, as shown in the following table:

**TABLE 6–5: Carrying, Lifting, and Pushing**

| Body Score | Carrying | Lifting | Pushing |
|------------|----------|---------|---------|
| 1          | 5 kg     | 10 kg   | 20 kg   |
| 2          | 10 kg    | 20 kg   | 30 kg   |
| 3          | 20 kg    | 30 kg   | 40 kg   |
| 4          | 30 kg    | 40 kg   | 45 kg   |
| 5          | 40 kg    | 45 kg   | 50 kg   |
| 6          | 45 kg    | 50 kg   | 65 kg   |
| 7          | 50 kg    | 65 kg   | 75 kg   |
| 8          | 65 kg    | 75 kg   | 90 kg   |
| 9          | 75 kg    | 90 kg   | 110 kg  |
| 10         | 90 kg    | 110 kg  | 125 kg  |
| 11         | 110 kg   | 125 kg  | 250 kg  |
| 12         | 125 kg   | 250 kg  | 500 kg  |

A character can throw an object weighing no more than 1 kg a distance of 5 m for every point of his Body score. That distance is decreased by an appropriate factor if the weight of the thrown object is increased. Thus, a 2 kg object can be thrown half that distance, a 4 kg object can be thrown one-quarter that distance, and so on.

## SOCIAL INTERACTION

Personal combat is not the only way a character can interact with others among the Thousand Suns. Indeed, violence is generally viewed with distaste by most civilized beings, who see it as a last resort rather than a preferred course of action. Consequently, skills besides Shoot and Unarmed Combat play a prominent role in *THOUSAND SUNS* and both players and GMs are neglecting an important part of science fiction adventure by limiting their adventures to firefights and brawls.

## ATTITUDE LEVELS

How a character feels toward others is defined by one of the five attitudes. These levels, along with a brief description and the bonus or penalty to social interaction tests involving them, are shown below.

**TABLE 6–6: Attitude Levels**

| Level        | Description   | TN Modifier |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| Antagonistic | Antagonistic characters go to great lengths to oppose their enemies | (–2)        |
| Unfriendly   | Unfriendly characters hope harm comes to their opponents            | (–1)        |
| Neutral      | Neutral characters have no strong opinions either way               | (0)         |
| Friendly     | Friendly characters hope good things befall their friends           | (+1)        |
| Helpful      | Helpful characters go to great lengths to aid their friends         | (+2)        |

When a character meets a non-player character, the GM determines how the NPC feels about a character, using one of the five attitude to describe it. For example, a character meets an officious customs officer who is nosing around his starship, looking for contraband he believes the character is smuggling through an embargo. The GM decides the officer is Unfriendly toward the character. Alternately, the character runs into an old Navy crewmate whose life he saved during their days together in the service. Consequently, the crewmate is Friendly toward the character.

## CHANGING ATTITUDES

The purpose of any social interaction in *THOUSAND SUNS* is to change the attitude of non-player characters toward a character. This is accomplished by social skill tests, such as Bargain, Bureaucracy, Diplomacy, Empathy, Intimidation, Investigation, Socialize, and Streetwise. To do this, a character makes a test, using the TN modifiers appropriate to the NPC's attitude level toward him. Table 6–7 shows how many degrees of success the character must achieve to shift the NPC's attitude toward him by one level. The number of degrees of success required is based on the NPC's Will.

**TABLE 6–7: Changing Attitudes**

| Will | Degrees of Success Required |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 1–4  | 0–2                         |
| 5–7  | 3–5                         |
| 8–10 | 6–8                         |
| 11   | 9–11                        |
| 12   | 12+                         |

As an example, suppose a character is trying to convince a doctor at a hospital to let him look at a patient's medical records. The doctor has a Will of 7 and is initially Unfriendly

toward the character (–1 TN to all social interaction tests), because his superiors have given him orders not to provide information to outsiders about this particular patient, but he has no personal stake in opposing the character. To get the doctor to help, the GM states that the character must change his attitude so that he is at least Friendly toward him. Social interaction skills allow a character to do that.

Let us assume a character decides to use Bureaucracy to do so, quoting rules and regulations to convince the doctor that he ought to release the records to him. He makes a Bureaucracy test and achieves 3 degrees of success. To this, the character adds his rank in the social interaction skill he used. Since he has rank 6 in Bureaucracy, the result is 9 degrees of success. Consulting Table 6–7, the player sees he needs only 3–5 degrees of success to shift the doctor’s attitude one level. With 9 degrees of success, his character can shift the doctor’s attitude three levels. However, the target of a social interaction test gets the chance to resist, which he can do freely each round without incurring a multiple action penalty. Most social skills can be resisted by a Resist test, although the GM may decide that, in certain circumstances, other skills (such as Empathy) might be more appropriate.

The degrees of success achieved on a test to resist a character’s social skills are deducted from the total degrees of success achieved by the character attempting to influence the target. If the target achieves more degrees of success than the character attempting to influence him, the target’s attitude may harden. For every 3 degrees of success achieved by the resisting character, his attitude drops by one level, making him harder to influence in the future. Furthermore, the social skill previously used can no longer be used, representing that the defender is no longer impressed by the character’s efforts. A character can continue to try and influence the defender’s attitude with other social skills, if they can plausibly be used. Otherwise, the social interaction ends at that point. For example, if a character fails to use Bureaucracy to convince the doctor, he must either admit defeat or find another appropriate skill to use – perhaps Bargain, trying to fast-talk the doctor into doing what he wants.

## SOCIAL INTERACTION AND PLAYER CHARACTERS

The social interaction system is primarily intended for use with non-player characters, but, if the players and GM wish to do so, it can be applied to player characters as well. If so, it will then be possible for NPCs to use their social skills against a player character and change his attitudes toward them. Naturally, the player decides how his character feels about any NPC, setting the initial attitude level. Once that is done, however, NPCs can do their best to make his character feel better disposed toward them, just as his character might do to an NPC.

Some players might balk at this and that is understandable. Players frequently do not like losing control of their character’s actions and having a *femme fatale* seduce a character or a wily merchant cheat him out of hard-earned sols only emphasizes this fact. However, it is important to remember that a player’s character is not himself and that, while he did create him, he might not necessarily behave as the player would in the same circumstances. Likewise, a player often knows more than his character. That is, he may know that the beautiful woman who has shown romantic interest in his character is a Myrmidon spy, but would his character know this? Consequently, having a character “suffer” as a result of social interaction sometimes makes perfect sense and is a natural result of how an adventure unfolds.

Nevertheless, the use of these rules against player characters is entirely optional and should never be introduced into a campaign without the concurrence of both players and Game Master.



Sometimes mental contact is more useful than any technology.

# CHAPTER 7: PSI

There is, I am absolutely certain, a science of the mind which is as definite, as positive, as immutable of law, as is the science of the physical.

— E.E. Smith, *First lensman* (1950)

# CHAPTER 7: PSI

In *THOUSAND SUNS*, a character who possesses mental, or “psi,” powers is known as an “esper.” The presence of psi powers in any campaign is entirely optional and each Game Master must decide for himself whether he wishes to allow them or not. Indeed, some GMs may wish to rein in psi either for dramatic or scientific reasons. Players are thus advised to check with their GM beforehand to see if he allows psi powers at all or if he limits them in some way beyond what is described in this chapter.

Most Terran-descended cultures are suspicious of espers and their unique abilities, even when they recognize their value. Consequently, many worlds and interstellar governments restrict or even proscribe the use of psi powers without official sanction. Naturally, attitudes among non-human alien species vary greatly from the Terran norm. Each Game Master must decide for his own campaign the extent to which psi powers are tolerated.

## ACQUIRING PSI POWERS

Espers acquire psi powers by purchasing them in the same manner as skills. Typically, the purchase of psi powers is restricted to characters who have taken one or more levels in a psi-capable career package (see *Esper Career Packages*, p. 71), since psi ability rarely manifests in Terrans late in life. There are always exceptions, of course, and there may be good reasons why a player might wish to purchase psi powers for his character after initial generation. The Game Master is the final arbiter of what constitutes a good cause in this case, based on his own judgment and the nature of his campaign.

## USING PSI POWERS

Unless otherwise stated in their descriptions, all psi powers use the following guidelines.

### ABILITIES

Powers are associated with a single ability, just like skills. Which ability is noted in parentheses after a power's name.

### ACTION

Using psi powers takes a particular amount of time, as given in their descriptions. Most powers use a character's action in combat; a few are instantaneous. Powers are subject to the normal rules regarding actions (see *Actions*, p. 90).

### VITALITY DAMAGE

The use of psi powers is physically taxing. Each use of a power deals a particular amount of Vitality damage on the esper. If an esper's total Vitality damage exceeds his current Vitality, then the esper becomes unconscious. Vitality damage caused by using psi powers heals normally.



*THOUSAND SUNS* provides no definitive answer to this question, because there is no answer that can either stand up to serious scientific scrutiny or satisfy every player. Psi exists in the game because it's a common part of the Imperial SF genre. Older science fiction authors tended to assume that, in time, science comes to understand the human brain to such an extent that powers previously believed to be supernatural become much less rare, even if far from commonplace.

*THOUSAND SUNS* makes the same general assumption: psi is wholly natural and not at all “magical” in nature. However, its precise origin, whether it be a consequence of quantum mechanics or an application of chaos theory, to cite but two possibilities, is left to each GM to decide for his own campaign. Likewise, if a GM wishes to make psi something more overtly “mystical,” he is welcome to do so. Future discussions of psi will follow this pattern, thereby avoiding any specific comments about psi that might contradict an individual GM’s choice for his own campaign.

If the Vitality damage from using a psi power causes the user to become unconscious, then the power effect still happens, but cannot be maintained. So, an esper can, for example, make a psychic attack before becoming unconscious, but an esper who establishes a power such as Domination or Mind Reading, then becomes unconscious due to Vitality damage, cannot maintain the effects of the power.

The Vitality damage of some psi powers is determined by circumstances. The esper takes damage regardless of whether the power test is successful and the damage happens each time a power is retried as well.

## MASS

Some psi powers affect solid objects and creatures. The degrees of success an esper achieves on a psi power test determine the mass he is capable of affecting, as well as the additional Vitality suffered for doing so. If so desired, the esper can apply fewer degrees of success than those achieved in order to reduce the power’s cost.

TABLE 7–1: Mass

| Mass                      | Degrees of Success | Vitality Damage |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Up to 5 kg                | 0–2                | 1               |
| Up to 50 kg               | 3–5                | 2               |
| Up to 500 kg              | 6–8                | 4               |
| Up to 5000 kg (5 tons)    | 9–11               | 8               |
| Up to 50,000 kg (50 tons) | 12+                | 16              |

## DISTANCE

In general, psi powers have a fairly limited range, typically touch or line of sight. However, if he achieves sufficient degrees of success on a psi power test, he may extend the range, at the cost of additional Vitality damage. If so desired, the esper can apply fewer degrees of success than those achieved in order to reduce the power's cost.

**TABLE 7–2: Distance**

| Distance | Degrees of Success | Vitality Damage |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 km     | 0–2                | 1               |
| 5 km     | 3–5                | 2               |
| 10 km    | 6–8                | 4               |
| 25 km    | 9–11               | 8               |
| 50 km    | 12+                | 16              |

## MENTAL CONTACT

Some psi powers refer to the esper being in “mental contact” with the target. This involves the use of the Mental Contact power (p. 114), allowing the esper to “touch” another character’s mind. Targets in mental contact are considered “present” to the esper regardless of the actual distance between them. However, mental contact does not count as line of sight for psi powers that specifically require it.

## POWER TESTS

Some psi powers call for a test to activate. This is the same as any other test. The degree by which a roll is under the target number sometimes determines the effectiveness of the power. Some powers do not require a test and operate automatically. Such powers nevertheless take an action to activate, just like all other powers.

## ATTACK TESTS

Some psi powers require an attack test to affect a target, particularly in the midst of combat. Any power requiring an attack test also takes at least an action and counts as the character’s attack for that round. Powers requiring attack tests are subject to the normal combat modifiers detailed in **Chapter 6**.

## MULTIPLE TARGETS

Although it is easiest to use a psi power on a single target at a time, an esper can attempt to affect multiple targets with the same psi power at once: telekinetically lifting multiple objects, making mental contact with multiple minds, and so forth. This requires time, skill, and effort to achieve.

An esper attempting to use a psi power on more than one target at once increases the target number and the amount of Vitality damage by 2 for every additional target. So, affecting three targets at once is –4 TN and +4 Vitality damage. In addition, the TN of any Resist tests against an esper using his powers on multiple targets is increased by +2 per additional

target. If the power normally requires an action or more to use, then it requires an additional action, with the usual penalties associated with taking more than one action in a round (see *Multiple Actions*, p. 90).

The various targets must all be within range of the power. If the power requires mental contact, then the esper must be in mental contact with all the targets. The Game Master has the final say on whether a psi power can affect more than one target at a time.

## RESISTANCE

Psi powers affecting others can be resisted through an opposed test that pits the esper's power against the target's Resist skill. This test functions exactly like any other opposed test (see *Opposed Tests*, p. 15).

Targets of psi powers can choose to forgo the Resist test by willingly accepting the power's effects. This choice is made before the target knows what the effect is. This assumes a certain amount of trust toward the esper, which is often lacking in many cultures, where psi powers are viewed with suspicion.

## MAINTAINING PSI POWERS

Some psi powers can be maintained. That is, their effects can continue at the same level achieved by the initial use. This maintenance requires at least a modicum of concentration on the esper's part. Maintaining an effect requires an action each round. Using another psi power (or another application of the same power) while maintaining one or more powers is extremely difficult and incurs an additional -2 TN penalty in addition to the usual multiple action penalty (see **Chapter 6**). An esper distracted while maintaining psi powers must make an appropriate psi power test with a -2 TN for each additional power maintained after the first. Additional modifiers may apply for damage and other distracting conditions, at the discretion of the GM. A failed psi power test means that the esper stops maintaining all active powers. Optionally, the GM may rule that the esper only stops maintaining one power for every two degrees of failure of the psi power test (rounding down). An esper unable to take any actions (due to being stunned, for example) cannot maintain psi powers.

## PSI POWER DESCRIPTIONS

Psi powers operate similarly to skills, with a few modifications. No powers can be used by an untrained person, even an esper. A description of what each power does is included below, along with any rules for using the power. If a power costs Vitality, this is indicated. If a power requires maintenance, concentration, or mental contact, its description says so.

### ADAPTATION (WILL)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** 1

An esper can adapt his body to survive in hostile environments. He can make an Adaptation test and add any degrees of success achieved from it to improve the results of any Body-related tests to resist the effects of the environment. However, this power does not protect against falling damage, radiation, or catching on fire.

## BODY CONTROL (WILL)

**Action:** 1 (Maintenance) ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** Varies

An esper has great mental control over his body. He can make a Body Control test for a number of different tasks.

**TABLE 7–3: Body Control**

| Task  | Degrees of Success | Vitality Damage |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|
| Sleep normally despite distractions           | 0–2                | 1               |
| Sleep normally despite difficult distractions | 3–5                | 2               |
| Slow breathing to half normal rate            | 3–5                | 2               |
| Ignore pain or injury                         | 6–8                | 4               |
| Body awareness                                | 6–8                | 4               |
| Speed recovery                                | 6–8                | 4               |
| Slow breathing to one-quarter normal rate     | 6–8                | 4               |
| Willpower                                     | 6–8                | 4               |
| Feign death                                   | 9–11               | 8               |
| Overcome disease                              | see below          | 2               |
| Overcome poison                               | see below          | 2               |

**Body Awareness:** An esper can become very aware of his body while asleep or concentrating. This allows him to sense if he is touched or moved in any way, for example. If he is damaged, add the attack's damage to the target number of his Body Control test.

**Feign Death:** By exerting supreme control over his body, an esper can enter a deep trance almost indistinguishable from death. A successful Observe test opposed to his Body Control is required to determine whether the esper is still alive. Effects that detect life still work normally. While in this state, the esper also suspends the effects of any disease or poison in his system for as long as he remains in the trance.

**Ignore Pain or Injury:** An esper can ignore the effects of pain or injury (see *Damage*, p. 97) while awake or asleep. If he chooses, nothing can wake him, as long as he makes a successful Body Control test.

**Overcome Disease or Poison:** By concentrating for a round, an esper can use a Body Control test instead of a Resist test when trying to resist a disease or poison in his system.

**Sleeping:** A successful Body Control test allows an esper to sleep in difficult conditions, including bad weather, noise, buzzing insects, and so forth.

**Slow Breathing:** An esper can deliberately slow the rate of his breathing so that he consumes less air, vital in situations where there is a limited amount of breathable air available.

**Speed Recovery:** An esper can speed his natural healing process, regaining Vitality in half the normal time, so long as he spends that time in a deep, healing trance.

**Willpower:** By making a successful Body Control test, an esper can continue to act while disabled without his condition worsening. He still suffers additional damage normally.

## COMBAT SENSE (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** 2 + Degrees of Success

An esper can improve his ability in combat by sensing the flow of events around him. A Combat Sense test grants the esper a bonus to his attacks, whether melee or ranged, equal to the degrees of success achieved on the test. This bonus lasts for 10 rounds. If so desired, the esper can select a bonus that is less than the degrees of success achieved in order to reduce the power's cost.

## DOMINATION (WILL)

**Action:** 1 (Maintenance) ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 6

An esper can mentally control another creature's actions. No test is required; instead, the target must make a successful Resist test or fall under the control of the esper. The esper can force the target to perform any action he wishes, within the limits of his abilities. The esper is aware of what the target is experiencing via his mental link, but he does not receive direct sensory input from him. Targets forced to take actions against their natures receive a new Resist test with a bonus to the TN, ranging from +1 to +4, depending on how contrary to the target's nature the GM rules the action to be.

## ENHANCE ABILITY (WILL)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others, Self ■ **Cost:** 3

The esper can improve his Body or Dexterity for a short time. An Enhance Ability test adds a bonus to either the esper's Body or Dexterity for 10 rounds. The degrees of success achieved indicate the amount of the bonus. If desired, the esper can split the bonus equally between Body and Dexterity.



Domination in action.

## ENHANCE SENSES (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** 3

An esper can enhance his normal sensory abilities. An Enhance Senses test adds a bonus to Observe tests (or any other tests the GM rules benefit from improving the esper's senses). The degrees of success achieved indicates the amount of the bonus.

## MENTAL CONTACT (PRESENCE)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 2 + distance

An esper can make psychic contact with another mind. If the target has a Psychic Shield, the esper must make a Mental Contact test to overcome it. An unwilling target gets a Resist test to avoid contact. If the test is successful, no contact is made. If the esper does not want the target to know that he is making mental contact, he can make a Mental Contact test against the target's Empathy or Psychic Shield (whichever is higher). If the target succeeds, he is aware of the esper's attempts, whether he succeeds or fails.

While in mental contact with another creature, the esper and his target communicate at the rate of normal speech, "hearing" each other's transmitted thoughts. The esper can also send a single visual image each round instead of speaking. Both the esper and the target can choose to lie or omit information, as they are "speaking" to each other telepathically, not reading each other's thoughts.

Mental contact is two-way, meaning that the esper is in "mental contact" with the target for the purposes of using psi powers and vice versa. If a friendly mental contact turns hostile, the target can make a Resist or Psychic Shield test to break the contact. Once the target has failed such a test, he cannot break the contact. The intruder is in his mind until he choose to break contact or some outside force interferes, such as a distraction or another psi power such as Psychic Shield. If mental contact is broken, any other psi powers the esper is maintaining that require mental contact are also broken.

**Deathcry:** If a creature the esper is in mental contact with dies, he can make a Resist or Psychic Shield test to avoid being stunned and unable to act for 1 round by the psychic feedback. Since mental contact is two-way, this applies to any creature in mental contact with another. A creature can deliberately avoid letting out a deathcry when it dies by making a Resist test.

**Psychic Shout:** While in mental contact with another creature, an esper can hit them with a "psychic shout" (the mental equivalent of screaming in their ear). A psychic shout takes 1 action and the creature must make a Resist test or be stunned and unable to act for 1 round. An esper can initiate mental contact and psychically shout in the same round.

**Rapport:** Two or more characters with the Mental Contact power can enter a psychic rapport with each other — an intense state of mental contact. Each character establishes mental contact with the other (who must be willing). Character in rapport are like one mind, each instantly aware of everything the other thinks and experiences. Characters in rapport cannot deliberately lie or deceive each other.

**MIND READING (PERCEPTION)**

**Action:** 1   ■   **Performed On:** Others   ■   **Cost:** 4

An esper can read information from another creature’s mind by making an opposed Mind Reading test, with the final degrees of success determining the level of information to which he gains access. The esper can locate one piece of information per round as an action so long as he continues to concentrate.

**TABLE 7—4: Mind Reading**

| Level of Access   | Degrees of Success |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Surface Thoughts  | 0–2                |
| Associations      | 3–5                |
| Short-term Memory | 6–8                |
| Long-term Memory  | 9–11               |
| Subconscious      | 12+                |

**Surface Thoughts:** The esper can learn what the subject is thinking. A successful Bargain test against the target’s Empathy causes the target to think consciously about a particular piece of information the esper is looking for, such as a password or name, allowing him to pick it from the target’s surface thoughts.

**Associations:** The esper picks up emotional and informational associations with the target’s surface thoughts. For example, if the target is thinking about someone, the esper knows how the target feels about the person, what her relationship to the target is, and why the target is thinking about her.

**Short-term Memory:** The esper can access the target’s memories of the past week or so, picking up on recollections and associations from that time.

**Long-term Memory:** The esper can access any of the target’s conscious memories, although the information is only as accurate as the subject recalls.

**Subconscious:** The esper can access the target’s subconscious. That gives him access to memories and information the target may not consciously recall (due to trauma or simple forgetfulness). It also grants the esper insight into the target’s psyche, such as her deep subconscious desires, fears, and so forth.

**PRECOGNITION (PERCEPTION)**

**Action:** 1   ■   **Performed On:** Self   ■   **Cost:** 9 for active precognition, 1 for spontaneous visions, 0 for danger sense

An esper receives visions of future events, as if he were actually present at that time. The visions he receives are by no means assured: the future can be changed by the actions of those in the present.

**Active Precognition:** The esper can attempt to see the future of a particular person, place, or object with which he is in contact (including himself). He must be able to see or touch the target of his power.



**Spontaneous Visions:** Precognition may spontaneously activate at the GM's discretion when an esper is in contact with a subject with particularly strong "vibes" or there is a momentous event approaching in the future.

**Danger Sense:** Whenever an esper would normally be surprised (see *Surprise*, p. 88), he can make a Precognition test. If successful, he is not surprised and can take act normally, even if his companions are surprised.

The GM should make Precognition tests secretly so that the player does not necessarily know if a particular vision was accurate or not. Consult the table below for the results of a precognitive vision, based on the results:

**TABLE 7–5: Precognition**

| Degrees of Success | Result  |
|--------------------|---|
| 0–2                | A vague vision of the future that may be accurate   |
| 3–5                | An accurate glimpse at the future   |
| 6–8                | Awareness of how long before a particular event occurs  |
| 9–11               | Awareness of the people involved in a particular future event   |
| 12+                | Awareness of the time, subjects, and location of a future event. Near-complete knowledge of a particular future event and everything involving it |

## PSYCHIC ASSAULT (PRESENCE)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 4

An esper can psychically attack another creature's mind in his line of sight or with whom he is in mental contact. The damage done is equal to his Psychic Assault ranks, plus the degrees of success achieved.

## PSYCHIC SENSE (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 0 ■ **Performed On:** Object, Others ■ **Cost:** 0 for sensing power use and mental contact, 1 for sensing psychic signatures and tracing

An esper can sense the use of psi powers by making a Psychic Sense test to perceive any such use in his vicinity, as well as to detect an attempt at mental contact, to detect and read the psychic "signature" left behind by psi power use, or to trace the source of a psychic manifestation.

**Sense Psi Power Use:** The GM makes a Psychic Sense test for the esper in secret as a reaction whenever a psi power is use in his general area. If the user of the psi power has an active Psychic Shield (p. 117), this is an opposed test. In addition, the TN of the test is decreased by –1 for every 3 meters between the esper and the user or target of the psi power (whichever is closer). A successful result means that the esper senses the psi power use, but not necessarily the psi power used. The esper also knows the general direction and distance to the source of the power and its target, if both are within the range at which he first detected them. If the esper succeeds by 5 degrees of success or more, he knows the exact psi power used. If he succeeds by 10 degrees of success or more, he recognizes the user of the power, if already known to him.

**Sense Mental Contact:** The esper makes a Psychic Sense test against a telepath's Mental Contact test to know when someone is trying to secretly gain mental contact with him. If the esper wins the opposed test, he senses the attempt, although he may not be able to avoid it (depending on his Psychic Shield and Resist tests).

**Sense Psychic Signature:** An esper can sense old uses of psi powers in a particular area. He must achieve 3–5 degrees of success to detect that a psi power was used in the area in the past and 6–8 degrees of success to determine what power was used and roughly when. 9–12 degrees of success are required to know exactly what power was used and what (or who) it was used on.

**Psychic Tracing:** An esper can trace the origin of any psi power that he can detect. Each requires a separate test. The TN is usually unmodified, but a target who does not wish to be detected can make an opposed Psychic Shield test. Distance is not a factor, but the esper must have detected the psi power use before it can be traced. When used on old psychic signatures, this gives the esper the power's origin and target at the time it was used; it does not provide information as to their current whereabouts.

## PSYCHIC SHIELD (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 0 ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** 0

An esper can shield his mind from psychic influences when he is the target of any psi power that grants a Resist test. The attacker must make an opposed power test against the target's Psychic Shield. If the target achieves more degrees of success, the attack fails. If the attacker achieves more degrees of success, the psi power works normally, although the target may still make a Resist test. An esper may voluntarily lower his psychic shield at any time (and can raise it just as easily). Otherwise, an esper's shield is assumed to always be active, even if he is unconscious or sleeping.

**Overcoming Psychic Shields:** An attacker can attempt to use extra effort to overcome an esper's psychic shield and he can reinforce it at the same time. For each point of Vitality damage that the attacker is willing to suffer, he reduces the esper's degrees of success by 1 (but not to less than 0). For each point of Vitality damage the esper is willing to suffer, he increases his degrees of success by 1 (but not higher than the number of successes achieved through the test). This process takes no actual time, but an attacker trying to avoid notice cannot use extra effort.

**Shields and Maintained Skills:** Once a psi power has overcome an esper's psychic shield, it continues to affect him as long as the user maintains it. The esper is still entitled to his normal Resist tests (if any), but his shield no longer protects him. Once the attacker needs to make a new psi power test, the esper's shield comes into play and must be overcome again.

**Deathblock:** In extreme cases, an esper can prevent mental tampering of any sort by setting a "deathblock." Thereafter, if the esper fails both Psychic Shield and Resist tests against a psi power that requires mental contact, his mind collapses in on itself rather than bend to the invading psyche. In essence, the esper dies rather than allowing the psi power to affect him. Among other things, this prevents the esper from being telepathically interrogated, controlled, or altered in any way.

Deathblocks are considered a last line of defense. An esper who achieves mental contact with another esper can tell that there is a deathblock in place unless there's a deliberate attempt to hide it, in which case an opposed Psychic Sense and Psychic Shield test is required to do so. An esper can set a deathblock for specific circumstances, such as to protect a specific piece of information, or only to guard against specific psi powers (such as Mind Reading or Domination). The esper who set the deathblock always chooses whether to activate it and can choose to deactivate it at the last second, if necessary.

## PSYCHOMETRY (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Objects, Others ■ **Cost:** 6 for active psychometry, 1 for spontaneous visions

An esper can “read” psychic impressions from places and objects, getting images of their pasts, as if he were actually present at a particular event. The esper can use this power in two ways.

**Active Psychometry:** The esper can attempt to see the past of a particular person, place, or object with which he is in contact. He must be able to see or touch the object to use this power. This requires an action and a Psychometry test.

**Spontaneous Visions:** The esper’s power may also spontaneously activate at the GM’s discretion when he is in contact with a subject with particularly strong “psychic resonance.” This also requires a Psychometry test.

The Game Master should make Psychometry tests secretly so the player doesn’t necessarily know if a particular vision was accurate or not. Consult the table below for the results of the vision, based on the test.

**TABLE 7–6: Psychometry**

| Degrees of Success | Result  |
|--------------------|---|
| 0–2                | A vague vision that may not be accurate   |
| 3–5                | A brief and accurate vision of the events   |
| 6–8                | A longer vision of the events, encompassing everything that took place in a particular place and time |
| 9–11               | The ability to “rewind” the vision backward or forward in time to review the event                    |
| 12+                | The ability to track the vision backward through time and space to trace an event to its origin       |

## SENSE MINDS (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 1

An esper can determine the presence and location of other minds within 100 meters. With a successful test, the esper can determine their approximate number, their general type (animal, sapient, etc.), and their approximate location. The larger the number of minds present, the more general the information tends to be. Psychic Shield opposes Sense Minds. A Psychic Shield test that yields more degrees of success than an esper’s Sense Mind test allows a creature to go unnoticed.

## SUGGESTION (WILL)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 4

An esper can implant suggestions into the minds of others. The suggestion must be worded in such a manner as to make the activity sound reasonable. Asking a creature to stab itself, throw itself off a cliff, or some other obviously harmful act automatically fails. However, a suggestion that a pool of acid is actually pure water and that a quick dip would be refreshing is another matter. If the target’s Resist test fails, the suggested course of action is followed for up to 30 minutes per power rank, or until the course of action is complete, whichever comes first. The esper can specify conditions that trigger a particular course of action, in which case the duration is counted from when the triggering event occurs. A very reasonable suggestion may impose a penalty of –1 or –2 on the TN of the Resist test, at the GM’s discretion.



Psychometry can reveal information otherwise hidden.

## TELEKINESIS (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 (Maintenance) ■ **Performed On:** Objects ■ **Cost:** Varies

An esper can move objects with the power of his mind in his line of sight. Use *Table 7-1: Mass*, p. 109 to determine the degrees of success needed and the Vitality cost of such an action. An esper can move an object a distance of 2 meters per Telekinesis rank per round. If two espers vie for control of an object, use opposed Telekinesis tests. If a creature is holding an object, use an opposed Telekinesis and Body test. The winner controls the object for that round.

**Moving Creatures:** Using Telekinesis on a living being allows it a Resist test. If the test fails, consider the target an object. If the test succeeds, the power has no effect.

**Striking with Objects:** An esper can hit opponents with telekinetically controlled objects. This requires a Telekinesis test and the object deals damage, using the Vitality damage dealt to the esper as its Damage Value. So, a 500 kg object thrown by Telekinesis has a DV 4.

**Moving Multiple Objects:** An esper can attempt to move multiple objects at once. Use the target difficulty of the heaviest at -2 for each additional object (regardless of mass) and increase the Vitality damage by 2 for each additional object. The esper cannot strike a target with multiple objects as part of the same action.

**Fly:** An esper can telekinetically lift his own body. This requires a Telekinesis test at TN -6 (regardless of the esper's own mass) and allows flight at a speed of 2 meters per rank of Telekinesis. Doing so costs 8 Vitality points.

## TELEKINETIC BLAST (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 4

An esper can attack with a blast of telekinetic force against a target in his line of sight by making a Telekinetic Blast test. If the attack is successful, the blast does damage equal to the ranks in the power, plus the degrees of success. In addition, the target must achieve more degrees of success on a Dexterity test than the esper achieved or fly back 2 meters and be knocked prone.

## TELEKINETIC GRIP (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 4

An esper can grasp other creatures in his line of sight by making a Telekinetic Grip test. If successful, the grip does damage equal to the ranks in the power, plus the degrees of success. If the target makes a successful Resist test, he takes half damage. Armor and other forms of physical protection do not reduce the damage dealt by Telekinetic Grip.

## TELEKINETIC SHIELD (PERCEPTION)

**Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Self ■ **Cost:** 2

An esper can create a psychic barrier that protects him from attacks. The shield lasts for 10 rounds but requires no effort to maintain once created. It lasts until the esper is rendered unconscious or its duration expires. The esper can renew an existing telekinetic shield before it runs out without using an action, suffering the Vitality cost for invoking the power again but with no additional test required. The degrees of success determine the armor/dissipation value of the shield. This value is added to any such values acquired from wearing armor or other forms of technological protection.

TABLE 7–7: Telekinetic Shield

| Degrees of Success | Armor/Dissipation Value |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 0–2                | 2                       |
| 3–5                | 5                       |
| 6–8                | 10                      |
| 9–11               | 15                      |
| 12+                | 20                      |

**TELEMPATHY (PERCEPTION)****Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Others ■ **Cost:** 1

An esper can sense the emotional states of other creatures by making a Telepathy test. The target gets to make a Resist test. Whether the esper succeeds or fails, the target does not know that the esper is reading his emotions. If the target's Resist test fails, the esper gets a general idea of his emotions and mood. This grants the esper a bonus on the next test the esper makes against the target within the next 10 rounds, using any of the following skills: Bargain, Diplomacy, Empathy, Intimidation, and Socialize, although the GM may allow the bonus to be applied to other skills if he deems it appropriate.

TABLE 7–8: Telepathy

| Degrees of Success | Skill Bonus |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 0–2                | +1          |
| 3–5                | +2          |
| 6–8                | +3          |
| 9–11               | +4          |
| 12+                | +5          |

**TELEPERCEPTION (PERCEPTION)****Action:** 1 ■ **Performed On:** Objects, Others ■ **Cost:** 2 + distance

An esper can sense distant events as if he were present there by making a Teleperception test. If successful, the esper can observe the target, which is then considered in his line of sight for the purposes of other psi powers. The vision lasts for as long as the esper maintains it, but his ordinary senses are overridden, so he is unaware of what is happening near him while he is observing events elsewhere. Teleperception creates a psychic disturbance that creatures with Perception 6 or better can detect. Any such creature can make a Perception or Psychic Sense test, opposed by the esper's Teleperception test. Non-psychic creatures get the intense feeling of being watched. Creatures with psi ability see a ghostly or shadowy image of the esper observing them. Consequently, the observing esper is then considered in the target's line of sight for the purposes of psi powers.

## ADVANCED PSYCHIC TECHNIQUES

While the psi powers above cover most of their applications, there are some advanced uses of them, which are described in this section. Game Masters should consider these techniques optional. While they can add detail and tactical options to psychic characters, they also increase the complexity of psi powers, which may not be desirable in every campaign.

### EXTENDING PSYCHIC SHIELDS

An esper with Psychic Shield can extend his shield to protect others at the cost of strain and a reduction in shield effectiveness. The subjects to be protected must be either in the shield user's line of sight or in mental contact. Extending a psychic shield takes an action and costs 2 points of Vitality per additional subject protected by the shield. Each additional subject reduces the esper's effective Psychic Shield rank by 2, but cannot be reduced below rank 1. All protected subjects receive the normal benefits of the Psychic Shield at the effective rank and the shield user controls the entire shield. The extended shield can be maintained by paying the Vitality cost every 10 rounds and the user can withdraw any or all of the extended shield freely at any time.

### PSYCHICALLY AIDING OTHERS

An esper in mental contact with another character can use his action to grant him a +2 bonus on Resist tests or for any skill test where the esper's skill rank is equal to or greater than the subject's. Characters can also psychically aid others in shaking off mind-affecting powers, abilities, or conditions.

### TELEKINETICALLY WIELDING WEAPONS

Rather than simply striking opponents with random objects, an esper may wield a melee weapon telekinetically, enabling it to fight by "remote control." Telekinetically picking up a weapon requires an action; attacking with it does as well. The attacker makes a normal Melee test, but with a -4 penalty for the difficulties of remote-controlling the weapon and using his Will rather than Dexterity as its associated ability. The weapon deals normal damage. Attempts to "disarm" the esper by knocking the weapon out of his telekinetic grip are resolved by an opposed test of attacker's Body and the esper's Telekinesis.

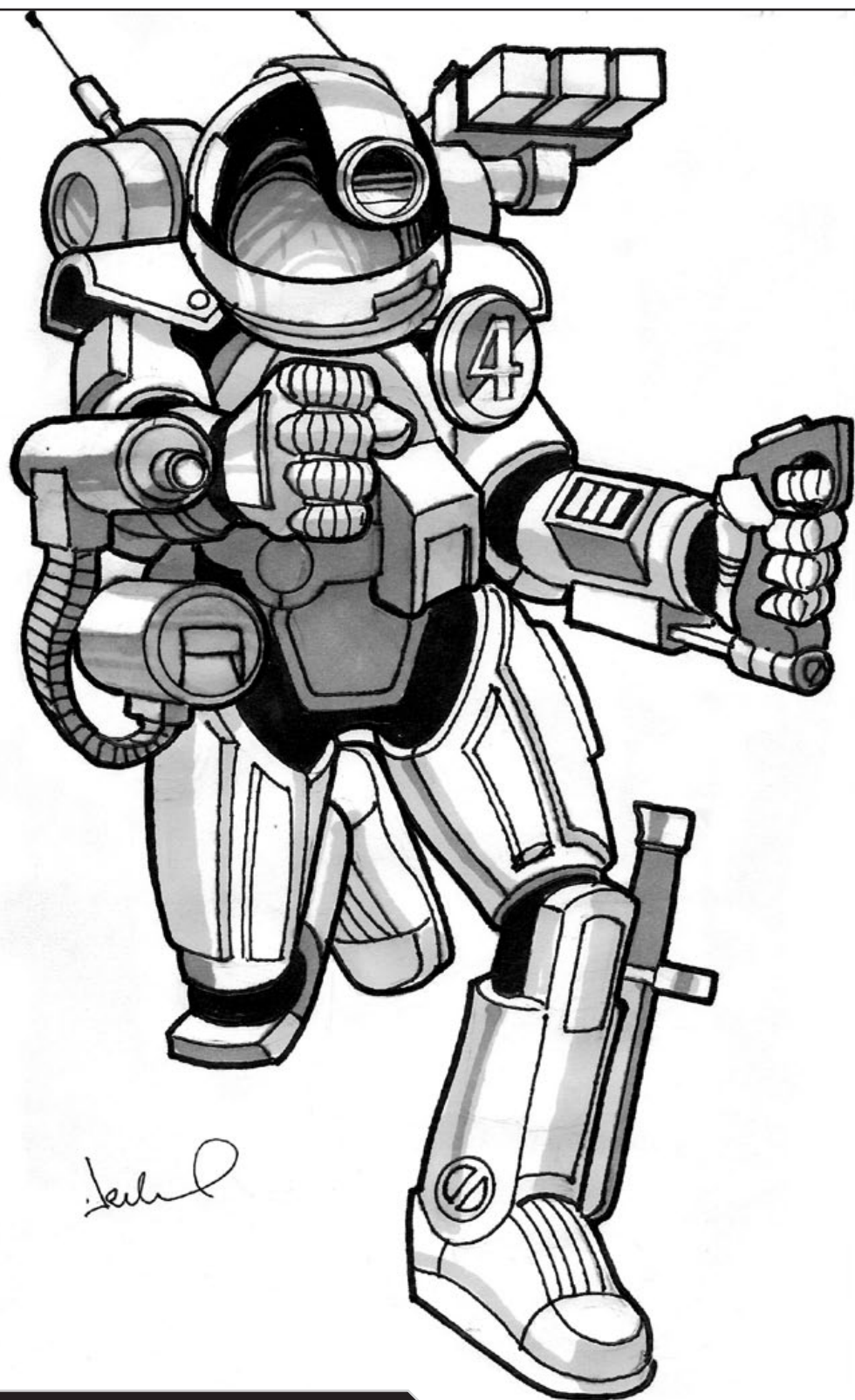
### TELEPATHIC EAVESDROPPING

An esper with Psychic Sense and Mind Reading who senses a use of the Mental Contact power can attempt to "listen in" on the mental conversation, intercepting the psychic transmissions. This requires a successful Psychic Sense test to detect the power use, followed by a successful Mind Reading test to eavesdrop on the mental conversation. This eavesdropping isn't detectable unless one of the participants in mental contact also has the Psychic Sense power and detects the eavesdropper's Mind Reading. This means that many telepaths observe "mental radio silence" when they know that other telepaths are around and may be listening.





Telekinesis can even be used to fly.



Space combat armor in action.

# CHAPTER 8: TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

— Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future* (Revised 1973)

# CHAPTER 8: TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

Science fiction is inextricably linked to technology, for it is through technology that many of the most interesting and exciting elements of science fiction come to light. This is no less the case in Imperial SF, where technology enables the protagonists to travel easily from world to world in a vast, inhabited galaxy. *THOUSAND SUNS* remains true to its literary inspirations in this respect and this chapter describes many of the myriad technologies that exist in the far future envisaged by this game.

Naturally, this chapter, even if infinitely long, could never be complete. What is included here barely scratches the surface of the technological wonders available in the Year 500 of the New Calendar. Game Masters are encouraged to use what is presented here as guidelines in creating their own technologies, always bearing in mind that, in Imperial SF, it is not the technology, but the characters who should be the most important elements of any adventure. Supplements to *Thousand Suns* will often add new technologies, expanding on what is provided in this chapter, but there should be more than enough options provided here to keep players and GMs alike satisfied for many adventures.

All prices in this chapter are given in sols, the most common currency unit in the *Thousand Suns*, represented by a “\$” after the amount. Each sol is divided into 100 cendoj, although these rules do not include prices below the cost of a single sol.

## ARMOR AND DEFENSES

Every advance in weaponry throughout history has been met with an advance in the ability to defend against it. Because of longstanding fears resulting from the Von Neumann Wars (see *The Von Neumann Wars*, p. 243), Terrans do not widely use robots or other artificial beings for military purposes, relying instead on sapient, biological soldiers. Consequently, a vast array of personal armor and defenses have been developed over the centuries, some of it remarkably effective.

### COMBAT ARMOR

Combat armor comes in three distinct varieties, depending on both the protection it affords and the types of additional features it offers. All three varieties see continuous use among the *Thousand Suns*.

#### LIGHT

Light combat armor provides less protection than later, heavier types, but also allows increased mobility. Most light combat armors consist of a reinforced blast vest, shoulder and upper arm pads, thigh and abdomen pads, and knee-pads. Some light combat armors also include helmets and visors, though not all incorporate this aspect of the armor.

## MEDIUM

Designed for heavy warfare and dangerous situations, medium combat armor covers the user almost head to toe in armor plating. Medium combat armor comes with a helmet that fits snugly on the head and does not interfere with the soldier's field of vision.

## HEAVY

The ultimate step in the creation of the one-soldier army, heavy combat armor is an all-in-one package that makes the wearer a formidable opponent in combat. The wearer is covered from head to toe. The helmet includes a built-in heads-up display and a visor that changes tint to dampen the effects of sudden bright lights, making flash-bang grenades useless against the wearer. Additionally, the armor usually has built-in slots for the addition of on-board computer systems, though not all armors make use of the option.

## FLIGHT SUIT

The flight suit and helmet combination worn by combat pilots doubles as body armor that protects grounded pilots. The flight suit contains Kevlar-lined pouches on the chest, back, arms, legs, and abdomen, into which armor plates are inserted. The helmet protects the head.

The armored flight suit carries over into later tech levels. Most military pilots at higher tech levels wear armored flight suits and helmets essentially the same as this version, though in the design appropriate to their society.

## MILITISTO ARMOR

The Militisto combat system was originally invented as part of the ongoing effort to increase the efficiency of the individual soldier. The primary benefits of Militisto armor are found in its communications and sensor gear; each suit has a built-in computer that is capable of sending and receiving text and image transmissions (via a display built into the armor), including images captured from the scope of a linked assault rifle or sniper rifle. Additionally, the display can be linked to the scopes on those weapons to provide real-time representations of what the scope can see, allowing the wearer to fire around corners with ease. In addition to the communications and data equipment, the armor functions as standard infantry battle armor complete with bullet-resistant plating and Kevlar protective gear. The armor allows for instantaneous transmission of coordinates and targeting information, allowing teams of Militisto-capable soldiers to communicate and coordinate with ease and efficiency.

## ŠTELECO SUIT

The šteleco suit uses cutting-edge sonic dampening technology to increase the stealth of the user. Šteleco suits look like form-fitting bodysuits with padding on the shoulders, elbows, and knees. Sonic dampening field generators are built into the suit, reducing to a minimum the noise made by movement. A character wearing a šteleco suit gains a +4 bonus to all Stealth tests.

## SKOLTO ARMOR

Skolto armor is similar in many ways to light combat armor, but with a few notable exceptions. Skolto armor is painted with camouflage patterns: woodland, desert, winter (primarily white), urban (gray patterned), and black are available. When worn in an appropriate setting, the armor grants a +3 bonus on Stealth tests.

Additionally, skolto armor lacks the knee-pads and leg wear of the light combat armor, increasing mobility but decreasing protection to the lower body. Skolto armor more often incorporates survival mods as fits the terrain for which it is designed.

## SPACE COMBAT ARMOR

Space combat armor is the first true powered armor to reach common use. Space combat armor consists of heavy body armor with an environmental seal and built-in communications gear. Additionally, space combat armor boasts a jet-pack specifically designed to function in space, allowing the user to maneuver in zero-G conditions. Space combat armor can be difficult and unwieldy, but makes even individual soldiers a threat in ship-to-ship combat.

## SPACE SUIT

The standard space suit is a completely enclosed environment suit capable of sustaining life in extremes of temperature and a lack of breathable air. The suit is composed of an insulated body suit and helmet with a transparent mask, all parts of which are capable of deflecting micro-meteors and other space-borne projectiles. Inside the suit, internal air tanks and environmental filters maintain temperature and pressure. Additionally, a communications system not only allows for radio transmissions but also allows internal sensors to monitor biological functions. The space suit is poor combat armor, but allows for movement and action in space.

## SURVIVAL SUIT

The survival suit is the natural evolution of wilderness survival gear. Thanks to the continued miniaturization of technology along with advancements in chemical engineering, the survival suit allows its wearer to function for days or even weeks on end without a source of water or rations. The basic premise of the survival suit is that in order to continue living in harsh environments the human body must conserve and recycle resources. As a result, the survival suit, which looks much like a modern-day wetsuit covered with matte-black pads, is able to control the intake and waste of the human body in an efficient manner.

Water is stored in small pouches all over the survival suit and can be drawn through a small tube that protrudes from the collar; the suit recycles sweat and urine (which it chemically purifies) and then refills those pouches as needed. The outside of the survival suit bears a number of partially reflective black pads, which absorb solar energy and heat and store that energy in tiny heat cells throughout the suit. If the temperature begins to drop, these heat cells can release energy and sustain a comfortable temperature for the human body for up to 8 hours without needing to recharge. If these cells are empty, the suit also has chemical pouches that can be activated one time for another 8 hours of heat. A tiny intravenous feeding system provides nourishment when rations and food run out for up to six days. Tiny fans and vents built into the suit cool the body in temperatures of extreme heat without losing any body moisture.

## PERSONAL ENERGY SHIELD

Though armor is extremely effective, it is not always practical to wear, especially in non-combat situations. Fortunately, other alternative means of protection exist, chief among them a personal energy shield. Worn around the waist like a belt, a shield projects an energy barrier about one centimeter away from the body of its wearer. If struck by kinetic

or energetic force above a certain magnitude, the shield activates to protect its wearer. The precise magnitude varies with the type of shield worn.

All personal energy shields have two armor ratings. The first number is the minimum amount of damage needed to activate the shield, while the second is the maximum amount of damage it will absorb. What this means is that attacks below the minimum will not activate the shield. The maximum rating works just like any other type of armor rating.

Personal energy shields are very useful but have several drawbacks. Because of the closeness of their energy projection, they cannot be worn with armor heavier than ordinary clothing. In addition, they do not protect against falls, radiation, or wide-impact damage, such as grenade or demolitions blasts. Any time a shield is exposed to such damage, there is a 50% chance (1–6 on 1D12) that the shield will cease to function for a number of rounds equal to the 1D12 roll, although a successful Technical Sciences test can restore its operation sooner.

TABLE 8–1: Armor

| Type                | Armor Value | Dissipation Value | Weight | Bulk | Cost   | Tech Level |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------|------|--------|------------|
| Flight Suit         | 6           | 0                 | 2      | 0    | 400\$  | V          |
| Heavy Combat Armor  | 35          | 45                | 50     | –2   | 7500\$ | VIII       |
| Light Combat Armor  | 15          | 30                | 2      | 0    | 2250\$ | VI         |
| Medium Combat Armor | 25          | 40                | 10     | –1   | 4000\$ | VII        |
| Militisto Armor     | 20          | 20                | 10     | 0    | 800\$  | V          |
| Teleco Suit         | 5           | 5                 | 2      | 0    | 1500\$ | VII        |
| Skolto Armor        | 20          | 15                | 20     | 0    | 4000\$ | VI         |
| Space Combat Armor  | 20          | 20                | 30     | –2   | 5000\$ | VII        |
| Space Suit          | 5           | 10                | 2.5    | –2   | 550\$  | V          |
| Survival Suit       | 5           | 5                 | 3      | 0    | 1500\$ | VI         |

- Armor Value:** The amount of damage subtracted from physical and ballistic hits.
- Dissipation Value:** The amount of damage subtracted from lasers, blasters, and other energy hits.
- Weight:** In kilograms.
- Bulk:** Modifier to Acrobatics, Athletics, Defend, Dodge, Stealth, and Subterfuge tests, as well as movement rate (in meters) while wearing the armor.
- Cost:** In sols.
- Tech Level:** Tech level where the armor first appears.

TABLE 8–2: Personal Energy Shields

| Type     | Minimum | Maximum | Cost   | Tech Level |
|----------|---------|---------|--------|------------|
| Mark I   | 15      | 20      | 3600\$ | VII        |
| Mark II  | 15      | 25      | 4500\$ | VIII       |
| Mark III | 10      | 25      | 6000\$ | VIII       |



# WEAPONS

The types of weapons available among the Thousand Suns are indeed immense. While no catalog of them could possibly be complete, the following provides a good overview of the types in common use, with a few exotic weapons thrown in for good measure.

## BLASTER WEAPONS

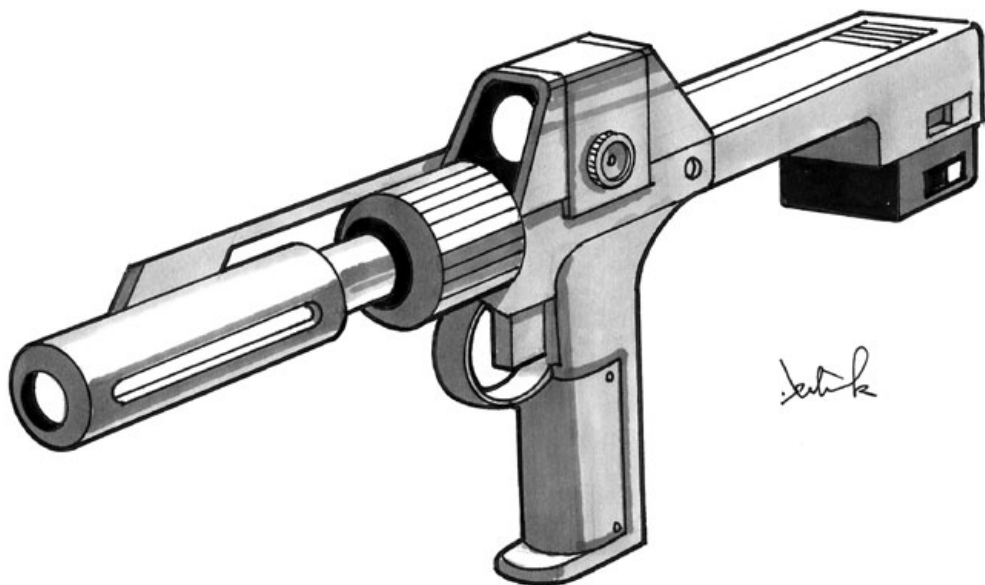
More properly called plasma weapons, blaster weapons come in many varieties. Most blasters generate their destructive ammunition by super heating gasses held inside specialized power packs and then compressing those gasses into a focused plasma round. Blaster weapons do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

## LASER WEAPONS

Laser weapons come in many shapes and sizes, from pistols to rifles and other long-arms. Many different forms of technology can be used to create laser weapons, resulting in many different forms of lasers; short, self-contained beams are as common as longer, solid stream lasers, while others produce spherical balls of energy and others fire laser rings. The coloration and noise created by the laser may vary, but the effect is the same. Laser weapons do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

## PULSE RIFLE

The pulse rifle is a fully automatic laser assault rifle capable of firing a rapid barrage of laser rounds. The pulse rifle is the standard issue weapon given to most heavy assault soldiers in advanced interstellar states. Pulse rifles do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.



Sunradio Lumo-3 Blaster Pistol.

## MISCELLANEOUS RANGED WEAPONS

Though blasters and laser weapons are the commonest types of ranged weaponry, numerous other technologies have been put to such use. A few are described below.

### PERSONAL GRENADE LAUNCHER

The personal grenade is somewhat different from its predecessors at lower tech levels in that it is reduced to roughly the size of a large pistol. Additionally, the ammunition it uses, while still as potent as hand-held counterparts, is reduced in size to match the weapon.

### SONIC BLASTER

The sonic blaster fires a pulse of destructive sound at the target. In addition, any creature damaged by the sonic pulse must succeed on a Body test at -2 or be shaken and unable to attack or defend for the next Round. Sonic beams do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

### TANGLER

A unique nonlethal weapon eagerly adopted by law enforcement agencies throughout the Thousand Suns, the tangler gun fires condensed balls of an incredibly sticky compound that can render a target immobile in a few short moments. The tangler gun fires pellets of an inert compound that, when broken, expand into a gelatinous substance that covers large portions of a target. Unfortunately for the target, the disgusting mess soon becomes more problematic as the compound hardens. Within seconds, a single pellet no larger than a fingernail has expanded into a ball of goop and then hardened into an immobilizing layer of tough chitin.

Any time a character is struck by a tangler gun, that character suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to Dexterity. This penalty remains in place until the compound is dissolved. If the character is struck with enough tangler pellets that the penalty is equal to or greater than his Dexterity score, he is immobilized and may take no actions until the compound is dissolved. Dexterity penalties from tangler guns stack with those from tangler grenades. Hardened compound dissolves naturally after 8 hours or can be removed by using solvaway chemical (p. 140) or some other spray solvent.

## SLUG THROWERS

Even in interstellar societies, the transfer of kinetic energy through projectiles remains one of the most efficient means of inflicting damage against a target.

### ASSAULT RIFLE

The weapon known in the Thousand Suns as an “assault rifle” is in fact a highly advanced combination weapon.

The weapon houses a 5.56mm compact assault rifle as well as a 20mm grenade launcher. The grenade launcher features multiple detonation modes, including detonate-on-impact mode (in which the grenade explodes on impact) and air burst mode (in which the grenade explodes in the air after traveling a certain distance).

The rifle includes a combat-capable scope with built-in targeting computers that are designed to link into the Militisto armor system. This system functions as a built-in night vision scope as well as a range-finding scope. Additionally, the weapon has an integrated computer link that can hook directly into the Militisto armor and transmit images and data

to the armor's on-board computer system. On its own, separate from the Militisto armor system, the assault rifle remains one of the most dangerous and effective low-tech weapons in the Thousand Suns.

### **SNIPER RIFLE**

With the success of the assault rifle, a sniper rifle equivalent was developed. The rifle itself fires a standard 7.62mm round and sports a range-finding scope that can connect to a Militisto combat armor computer. Additionally, the sniper rifle features a flash suppressor as well as an effective sound suppressor, ensuring maximum stealth.

### **18MM SHOTGUN**

Old fashioned though they may be, pump-action shotguns are still used on many worlds and remain favorites for self-defense in the Marches.

### **.50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN**

The .50 caliber machine gun is a reduced-recoil weapon capable of dispensing roughly 260 rounds per minute. The machine gun is designed for use in combat by two soldiers, a single gunner and an aide to feed the ammunition belt into the weapon. What makes this machine gun unique compared to its predecessors is that its reduced recoil allows for greater accuracy over longer distances with less variance in the aim of the user.

### **9MM AUTOMATIC PISTOL**

Self-loading automatic pistols of this type can be found in the hands of many on lower tech worlds throughout the Thousand Suns.

### **9MM REVOLVER**

Revolvers are rarely seen in the Thousand Suns but a handful of collectors and other enthusiasts keep them in circulation nonetheless.

### **9MM SUBMACHINE GUN**

Often possessing collapsible stocks, submachine guns, or SMGs, are popular for their ease of use and the ability to spray an area effectively with gunfire.

## **MELEE WEAPONS**

With the invention of personal shields (see above), melee weapons once again found utility under many circumstances. In addition, melee weapons play a prominent role in both the Kriilkna and Myrmidon cultures, where proficiency with these archaic weapons is deemed a sign of nobility and sophistication. For all these reasons, melee weapons are not at all uncommon among the worlds of the Thousand Suns.

### **MONOBLADE**

A weapon favored by dissolute rakes and other ne'er-do-wells, the monoblade is a long, thin sword whose cutting surface is exceedingly sharp owing to its molecular edge. Unlike the vibroblade, the monoblade is considered "civilized" and thus many cultures and sub-cultures within the Thousand Suns do not frown on its use in duels in the same way that they do with other melee weapons.

## VIBROBLADE

The vibroblade is made of a durable metal alloy many times tougher than steel. Inside the blade itself, and controlled by a switch on the hilt of the weapon, are microscopic machines that cause the blade to vibrate at incredibly high speeds. Though the wielder of the weapon is shielded from these vibrations by a soft hilt, any character or object struck by the vibroblade finds that the weapon is given extra cutting power thanks to its technological enhancements.

## THROWN WEAPONS

Like slug throwers, thrown weapons remain an efficient means of dealing damage to one's opponents, even in the technologically advanced societies of the Thousand Suns.

### GRENADE

By all reasonable measurements, thrown grenades are inefficient and often ineffective weapons. Nevertheless, like infantry, they still play an important role in situations where weapons like rockets or missiles are impractical, particularly in urban warfare and other close quarters combat.

Grenades are purchased in boxes of twenty.

### ACIDIC

This grenade releases a cloud of gas that dissolves organic matter, dealing acid damage each round to all living creatures and organic materials in a 2-meter-radius burst. Suspended in an artificial gravity well, the cloud persists until the gravity well collapses after 10 rounds. The gravity well prevents even strong winds from dispersing the acid cloud.

### CHEMICAL

A chemical grenade contains a chemical compound that combusts immediately upon contact with oxygen. When it detonates, it produces geysers of flame that fill a 3-meter burst radius. All creatures and objects within the burst radius take 2D12 points of damage. The blast also ignites clothing and other flammable items.

### EMP

An EMP grenade releases an electromagnetic pulse that instantly shorts out all electronic devices (including computers) within a 5-meter burst radius. Affected devices remain non-functional until repaired.

The EMP grenade deals no damage to living creatures. However, a creature with cybernetic attachments takes 1D12 points of Vitality damage per cybernetic attachment (maximum 5D12) and must succeed at a Body test or be stunned for the next round. An EMP grenade deals 3D12 points of electricity damage to a robot.

### FRAGMENTATION

The fragmentation grenade propels dangerous shards of metal outward at high velocity when it explodes. The grenade incorporates aerodynamic metal shards and directional tubes to ensure that each shard is propelled at lethal velocity along a set path. The result is a calculated field of flying shrapnel that is far more effective than the simple pop-and-spray chaos of lower-tech grenades.

## SONIC

A sonic pulse grenade deals damage to any living creature in the burst radius. Robots and other nonliving creatures are not affected. In addition, creatures that take damage from the sonic pulse grenade must also make a successful Body test at -2 or be unable to attack or defend the next round.

## STUN

A stun grenade deals no damage, but any creature within its 5-meter burst radius that fails a Dodge test at -2 must immediately make a Body test or be stunned for 2 rounds. A creature that succeeds on the Dodge test is not required to make a Body test and is unaffected by the grenade. A stun grenade has no effect on robots and other creatures immune to stunning effects.

## TANGLER

The tangler grenade operates on the same principle as the tangler gun, but targets an area rather than one specific character (see *Tangler*, p. 131).

## AMMUNITION

In the interests of speeding up play, no costs are given for ammunition in these rules, as the costs involved are small enough that all but the most destitute characters should be able to afford sufficient ammunition to keep their weapons loaded. There are two exceptions to this, however. The first pertains to those weapons that use a power backpack (p. 144). The backpack provides effectively unlimited ammunition, but a backpack must nevertheless be purchased for the weapon to work. The second pertains to grenades, which are purchased in boxes containing 20 grenades.

Game Masters who prefer a “grittier” or more realistic approach to ammunition are free to establish magazine sizes for each weapon and set costs for them. In our experience, players and GMs alike find keeping track of ammunition to be tedious bookkeeping that gets in the way of the action of the game. Nevertheless, GMs are encouraged to make *THOUSAND SUNS* their own by modifying and expanding it where these rules are stylized or less concerned with detail than is desired.

# OTHER TECHNOLOGIES AND EQUIPMENT

The Thousand Suns encompasses so many worlds, species, and tech levels that it is impossible to describe all the technologies and equipment available on them. Therefore, what follows is a listing of only some of the more common and universally used ones. GMs are encouraged to create additional pieces of equipment, using these as models.

## COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

Probably the most ubiquitous type of equipment is computer equipment. On all but the lowest tech worlds, computers play an important role, as evidenced by the wide variety of computer equipment available.

TABLE 8—3: Weapons

| Type                      | Damage Value | Range | Rate of Fire | Cost         | Concealment | Tech Level |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| .50 Caliber Machine Gun   | 5 (75)       | 30 m  | A            | 2100\$       | +2          | V          |
| 18mm Shotgun (Sh)         | 4 (60)       | 15 m  | S            | 550\$        | 0           | V          |
| 9mm Automatic Pistol (H)  | 4 (60)       | 9 m   | S, A         | 450\$        | −1          | V          |
| 9mm Revolver (H)          | 3 (60)       | 9 m   | S            | 350\$        | —           | V          |
| 9mm Submachine Gun (R)    | 4 (75)       | 22 m  | S, A         | 1300\$       | +2          | V          |
| Assault Rifle (R)         | 5 (70)       | 25 m  | S, A         | 1300\$       | +3          | V          |
| Blaster Pistol (EP)       | 5 (65)       | 5 m   | S            | 850\$        | −1          | VII        |
| Blaster Rifle (ER)        | 7 (80)       | 30 m  | S            | 2100\$       | +3          | VII        |
| Grenade, Acidic           | 2 (40)       | 1.5 m | 1            | 350\$ (box)  | —           | VII        |
| Grenade, Chemical         | 3 (40)       | 3 m   | 1            | 1200\$ (box) | —           | VI         |
| Grenade, EMP              | Special      | 6 m   | 1            | 500\$ (box)  | —           | VI         |
| Grenade, Fragmentation    | 6 (75)       | 6 m   | 1            | 1200\$ (box) | —           | V          |
| Grenade, Gravitic         | 7 (75)       | 3 m   | 1            | 2000\$ (box) | —           | VII        |
| Grenade, Sonic            | 3 (40)       | 5 m   | 1            | 500\$ (box)  | —           | V          |
| Grenade, Stun             | Special      | 3 m   | 1            | 900\$        | —           | VII        |
| Grenade, Tangler          | Special      | 1.5 m | 1            | 350\$ (box)  | —           | VI         |
| Laser Pistol (EP)         | 4 (60)       | 14 m  | S            | 650\$        | −1          | VI         |
| Laser Rifle (ER)          | 6 (75)       | 40 m  | S            | 1600\$       | +3          | VI         |
| Laser Sniper Rifle (ER)   | 7 (80)       | 50 m  | S            | 2250\$       | Impossible  | VI         |
| Monoblade                 | 2 (55)       | —     | —            | 450\$        | +1          | VII        |
| Personal Grenade Launcher | Varies       | 20 m  | S            | 0            | 1100\$      | VI         |
| Pulse Rifle (ER)          | 7 (75)       | 30 m  | S, A         | 2100\$       | +3          | VIII       |
| Sniper Rifle (R)          | 5 (80)       | 50 m  | S            | 1800\$       | Impossible  | V          |
| Sonic Blaster (S)         | 3 (30)       | 20 m  | S            | 450\$        | −1          | VIII       |
| Tangler Gun (H)           | Special      | 2 m   | S            | 450\$        | −1          | VI         |
| Vibroblade                | 3 (55)       | —     | —            | 350\$        | −2          | VI         |

**Type:** The letter in parentheses indicates the specialization of Shoot (if any) to which the weapon belongs, according to **Chapter 5**.

**Damage Value:** The number in parentheses is the weapon's maximum damage.

**Range:** Each doubling of the stated range defines the range category (short, medium, etc.), with rifles increasing each value by x5.

**Rate of Fire:** "S" indicates single shot capability, while "A" represents automatic capability.

**Cost:** In sols.

**Concealment:** Modifier to tests to Search other tests to find the weapon on a person.

**Tech Level:** Tech level at which the weapon first appears.

## DISPLAY CONTACTS

Like display glasses described below, display contacts are part of the miniaturization of computers. These contact lenses fit perfectly over the eye and project a semitransparent image that appears to be roughly 1 meter from the user and comparable to a 130-centimeter monitor. This can be used to show the character any computer display it is linked to, and is also frequently implemented into the heads-up display device to provide real-time data on objects and people in the character's field of vision.

## DISPLAY GLASSES

A logical advancement of video display and VR technology, these glasses provide on-the-go displays that can be hooked up to everything from computer systems to monitors and other audio-video equipment. Each pair of display glasses looks like a darkened pair of sunglasses and features one or two earpieces that wrap around the back of the ear. The glasses are semitransparent and allow the wearer to see both the display and the user's surroundings simultaneously.

## KARTO

As has been the case since the invention of the computer, the miniaturization of technology is most often seen in the area of computer size. The karto functions as a standard computer but is only about 75mm long. The karto may be hooked into any computer interface or display (including paint-on LCDs) and functions exactly like a personal computer.

## KODUMULO

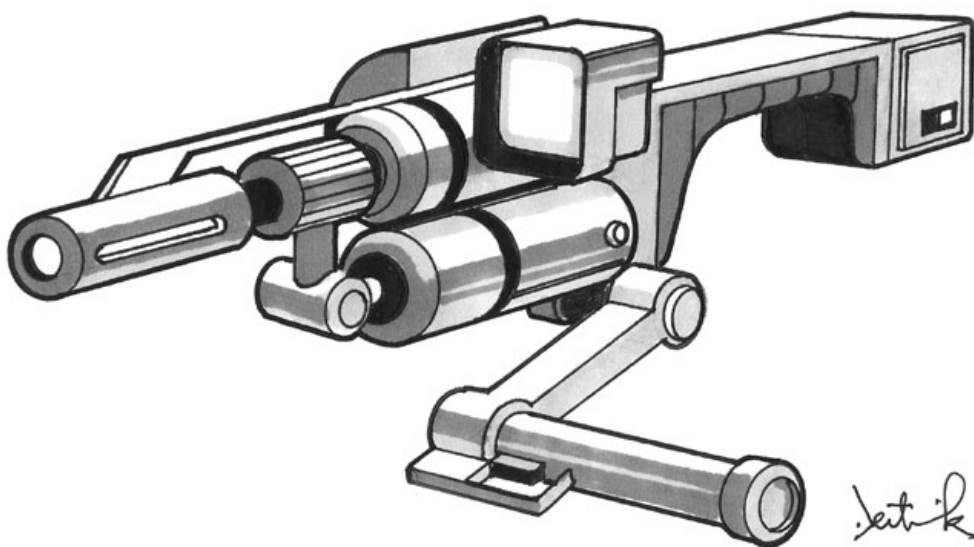
A marvel of computer technology, the kodumulo is a disposable, one-use item designed to allow those who are not computer savvy to bypass technological and computer barriers or perform computer-related tasks. Each kodumulo is an individual data-carrying card roughly the size of a karto (see above) with a hole in its center and a magnetic strip on one side. Each kodumulo carries a single program designed for a single purpose; this may be to open doors, bypass security restrictions, crash a computer, or even to modify information. Almost any task that can be performed by using the Computers skill can be encoded into a kodumulo. Kodumulos can be swiped in magnetic keycard readers and can be inserted into disc drives on computers with the same ease.

When a character uses a kodumulo for its designated purpose, a TN 15 is used to determine the success of the test rather than the user's own Computers skill. After a single use, the card triggers small fibers of combustible material and the kodumulo self-destructs, leaving behind no trace of tampering.

## NEURAL COMPUTER LINK

The most advanced form of computer interface in the Thousand Suns, the neural computer link creates a direct connection between a sapient creature's brain and a computer system. The neural computer link eliminates the need for a physical interface. Instead, the user simply "thinks" commands to the computer. Output from the computer is sent straight to the user's brain, tapping into the visualization centers to project images and displays directly into the user's mind, eliminating the need for any sort of display device. In all other ways, the neural computer link allows the user to access the computer as if used conventionally. The neural computer link connects to a computer system via a network jack built into the base of the skull.





Takamatsu-Hegener LF-1 Laser Rifle.

One advantage this gives a character is that information may be downloaded directly into the brain. The character's own mind becomes a hard drive for basic information, granting the character direct knowledge of a particular subject almost instantaneously. Though this does not allow the character to gain skill ranks, it does reduce the time required for Computers and Investigate tests. This applies only when the user is connected to a specific computer used for the Computers or Investigate tests.

The neural computer link can be connected, via the body's central nervous system, directly into the user's *şafisto* chip. Whenever data is transferred via the *şafisto* chip (p. 144), such as a person's identity, that knowledge is immediately loaded into the character's brain. Essentially, this means that any two characters with *şafisto* chips and neural computer links may instantly know one another simply by shaking hands.

### NEURAL NETWORK JACK, WIRELESS

A natural extension of neural computing technology, the wireless neural network jack plugs into the neural computer link and allows for remote access to computer networks. If the neural computer link is the basic means of connecting the human mind to a computer, the wireless neural network jack is the means of connecting the human mind to massive computer networks. A wireless neural network jack is useless unless the user also has a neural computer link.

## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

The worlds of the Thousand Suns are frequently dangerous places, which is why medical equipment is often of great use.

## BIOSCULP KIT, PERSONAL

The personal biosculp kit is fashionable with the rich and famous of the Core worlds — and the criminal underworld. Consisting of a mask that fits neatly over any human face, the personal plastic surgery kit is a one-use item that completely and permanently changes a character's facial appearance.

The personal biosculp kit is first linked to a special imaging computer that programs the kit with the desired outcome. The kit is then placed on the face and activated. The kit sedates the person using it and then proceeds to alter his face according to the specifications, and can even go so far as to permanently alter eye and hair color. Using the kit takes one hour, during which the character is unconscious.

## CHEMICALS AND DRUGS

A wide variety of chemicals and drugs can be found throughout the Thousand Suns, each one of them tailored for a specific purpose.

### AKCEL

A drug that is both beneficial and highly dangerous, akcel functions as a temporary adrenaline-enhancer. Akcel was originally conceived for military purposes in an attempt to make soldiers stronger, faster, and more combat-capable. A single injection of akcel grants the character a +4 bonus to Strength and a +2 bonus to Dexterity-related tests, and increases the character's movement speed by 5 meters. These effects last for 10 rounds.

Unfortunately, the side effects of akcel almost outweigh the benefits. For one, the chemical is addictive and can alter the perceptions of a character so that he thinks he cannot live without a dose of the drug. Additionally, repeated use of akcel has debilitating effects on the body's immune and nervous systems.

Each time a character uses a dose of akcel, roll 1D12. If the result is 1 or 2, he suffers a -2 penalty to Dexterity-related tests and a -1 penalty on Body-related tests. These penalties last for 24 hours. If the character uses the drug again before recovering from these penalties, the penalties increase and the recovery time extends for an additional 24 hours. For example, if a character uses another dose of akcel while still under the effect of these penalties, the character then suffers a -4 penalty to Dexterity-related tests and -2 on Body-related tests, and the recovery time increases to 48 hours.

### ANTITOX

A chemical found in many first aid kits, antitox is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to save the life of any character infected with a poison. Each antitox injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target's blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the poison and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the antitox delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the poison and its effects in 1 round.

### BIOCORT

Biocort is a unique chemical compound that enhances the human body's natural ability to heal. Biocort pushes the immune system into overdrive, and can cause the character to heal from grievous wounds at a greatly increased rate. Any character injected with biocort heals at twice the normal rate for a 24-hour period.

## MORTINTA

Also known as “slow,” mortinta is a drug that places a sentient being in a state of suspended animation for up to six months, after which its effects wear off and (in principle anyway) the subject awakens, having neither experienced the intervening time nor aged biologically. A mortinta user can be awakened prematurely through the use of an antidote. Interstellar travelers frequently use mortinta if they have no interest in remaining awake during a long jump.

Mortinta is generally effective without any ill effects. However, on each use, the GM should roll 2D12. On a 24 result, a character using it must make a successful Body + Will test. Failure results in death. Unsurprisingly, mortinta is used primarily because of its cheapness, although some thrill seekers actually enjoy the possibility that their next interstellar jump could be their last.

## NEUTRAD

A chemical found in many first aid kits, neutrad is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to neutralize the effects of radiation poisoning. Each neutrad injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target’s blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the radiation sickness and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the neutrad delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the radiation poisoning and its effects in 1 hour.

## PLASTIFLESH

Contained in a small spray can, plastiflesh bonds with human skin on contact and accelerates the healing process by providing a layer of artificial skin to seal the wound. The target of the spray immediately recovers  $1D12 \div 2$  Vitality. No Medical Sciences test is required to use plastiflesh.

## PSI ENHANCER

Psi enhancer improves the user’s psi powers. For 10 minutes after a dose is taken, the esper gains a bonus to all psi power tests (+1 per dose consumed). After the enhancer wears off, the esper suffers damage equal to the bonus squared. An esper who takes more than five doses of psi enhancer within a 24-hour period must also make a Resist test at  $-2$  or be immediately reduced to 0 Vitality.

## PSI STAMINA

For up to 8 hours after taking this drug, an esper can accumulate any amount of Vitality damage from using psi powers with no ill effects. The damage is “postponed” until the drug wears off. Then, the esper suffers all the Vitality damage accumulated from power use at once. If the total exceeds the character’s Vitality total, he becomes unconscious and begins to die.

## PSI SUPPRESSOR

This drug suppresses psi ability. It can be introduced into an esper’s system in food or drink or even through a scratch with a treated weapon. The victim must make a Resist test at  $-2$  or become unable to use any psi powers for 1 hour. Once a dose of psi suppressor has taken effect, additional doses have no effect until the first one wears off.

## RAPIDE

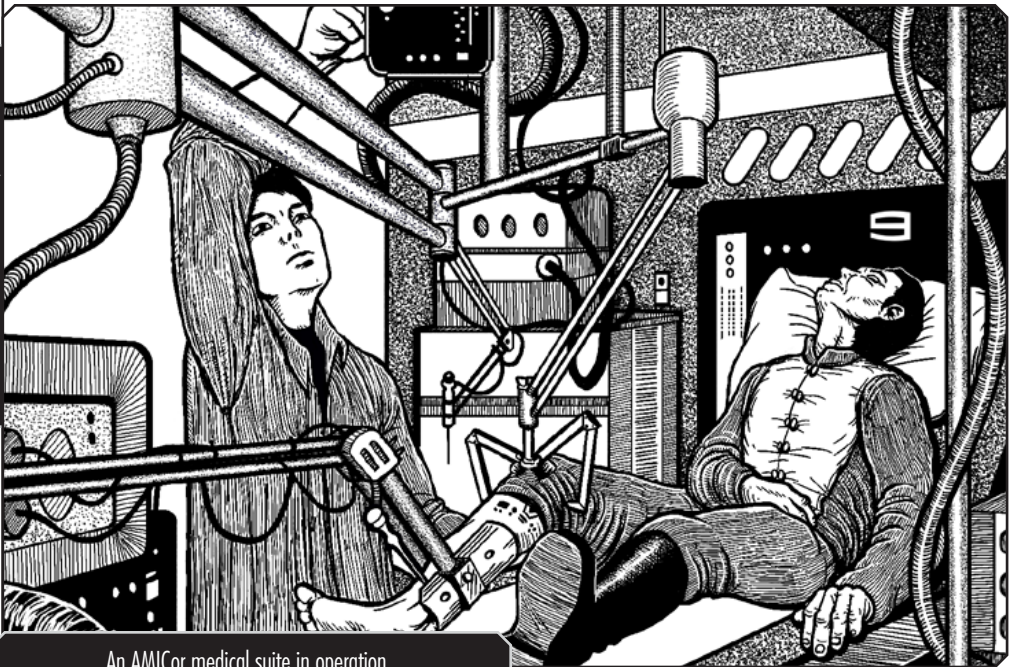
Also known as “wake,” rapide is a drug that speeds up the perception of time to four times the usual rate. Each dose lasts 24 hours, during which time the character who has ingested it experiences the day as if it lasted only 6 hours. Rapide is taken by interstellar travelers in order to overcome the boredom of long jumps. Extended use of rapide has no known side effects, unlike its counterpart, mortinta.

## SOLVAWAY

Solvaway is a special spray-on chemical designed to break through the restricting compound fired by tangler guns and tangler grenades. A single application of solvaway completely dissolves any hardened compound and frees the character as though the compound had dissolved on its own.

## SPOREKILL

A chemical found in many first aid kits, sporekill is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to neutralize the effects of most diseases. Each sporekill injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target's blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the disease and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the sporekill delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the disease and its effects in 1D12 hours. Some genetically engineered diseases are created to circumvent sporekill chemical, and are unaffected by this piece of gear.



An AMICor medical suite in operation.

## TRUTHTELL

Truthtell is a specially formulated chemical that targets areas of the brain that handle creativity and, particularly, lying. By temporarily neutralizing these areas of the brain, truthtell makes it impossible for a character to lie while under the drug's influence.

A character injected with truthtell may make a Resist test to negate its effects. On a failed test, the character is compelled to speak truthfully for the next 3D12 minutes. A subject under the effect of truthtell is aware of its influence and may still refuse to answer questions.

## MEDKIT, ADVANCED

The advanced medkit functions exactly like the fast-use medkit described below, except that it can be used to perform surgery. It also grants its user a +2 bonus on all Medical Sciences tests.

## MEDKIT, FAST-USE

The fast-use medkit functions as both a first aid kit and a medical kit. In addition, specialized computers and sensors prepare exactly what is needed to restore a character's Vitality, treat a disease, stabilize a dying character, or revive an unconscious character. Use of a fast-use medkit immediately restores a number of Vitality equal to the treated character's Body + Will.

The fast-use medkit cannot be used as a surgery kit.

## REGEN WAND

A regen wand is a tubular device roughly 40 centimeters long. It emits waves of energy that promote cellular growth and healing. A character can use a regen wand as a first aid kit or medical kit. Because of the device's simplicity, Medical Sciences tests made with the regen wand gain a +2 bonus.

## MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

Some types of equipment cannot be easily categorized; these items that are described below.

### DISGUISE KIT, MORPHIC

Most people forced to work undercover for extended periods rely on the morphic disguise kit. The kit features a pair of contact lenses that change color, a hair prosthetic that changes color, length, and texture, a paint-on LCD injector for instant tattoos that transform, and a vocal encoder (vocoder) that is attached to the throat to alter the user's voice. Each component can be altered on command. The morphic disguise kit grants a +4 bonus on all Performance (Disguise) tests while in use.

### DURACABLE

Strong as steel, flexible as rubber, and almost as light as normal rope, duracable replaces most cables and ropes as the standard device for lifting, pulling, and support. Duracable is made of lightweight and durable wiring wrapped hundreds of times in a swirl that reinforces itself as more stress is placed on the coil. Duracable is able to support up to 10 metric tons of weight.

### FLASH-SEAL

Flash-seal looks like a block of metal roughly the size of a thin brick. It attaches to any door frame. When activated, chemical compounds inside the block of metal burn fast and hot enough to melt the metal into a liquid form. Almost instantaneously, a second chemical

compound freezes the molten metal back into its solid state. The result is that the metal melts, sinks into the space between the door and its frame, and then solidifies again, essentially welding the door shut. A door that has been flash-sealed may not be opened by normal means and must be destroyed or cut through as though it were a wall.

## **FUSION TORCH**

The fusion torch produces a small, thin gout of flame that burns with such intensity that it creates temporary blobs of plasma all around it. The fusion torch consists of a small fuel canister attached to the torch generator. The torch deals 3D12 points of damage each round to immobile objects. Due to the nature of the fusion torch, a character using the torch must be meticulous in the way he cuts to maximize damage to whatever he is slicing through. If used as an improvised weapon, the fusion torch has a Damage Value of 2 since it is being wielded in a more haphazard fashion.

## **GRAPPLER TAG**

Often used in conjunction with duracable, the grappler tag is a small disc roughly 15 centimeters in diameter. When placed against a solid surface, the grappler tag attaches to that surface by magnetism (if the surface is ferrous) or by an array of nearly microscopic metal barbs (if not). The tag can then be attached to duracable and used as an anchor for climbing, pulling, or any other purpose. A button on the top of the disc releases the grappler tag's hold.

## **HEADS-UP DISPLAY (HUD)**

One of the most valuable innovations in portable information technology is the personal heads-up display (HUD). A HUD is composed of optical sensors for taking in data and a display device that projects an overlay in the user's field of vision. A HUD also typically incorporates some sort of communications link or data link to allow another person or computer to see what the wearer sees and transmit valuable information back to the HUD.

Over the centuries, the HUD display device transforms from a simple eyepiece worn on a headband to contact lenses that can display data, all the way up to a neural interface that simply taps into the bearer's optical nerve and tampers with the signals sent to the brain. The standard HUD can be used to highlight the outline of a person or object on voice command, granting a +1 bonus on Observe tests when pursuing a specific target. Additionally, a person with a link to the HUD can freely send data and images to the wearer at any time. Individual software packages can further augment the abilities of a HUD.

## **HOLOGRAM PLAYER**

A hologram player is a small disc with several small light projectors arranged around its outer edge. When activated, the device projects a three-dimensional image in full color as small as 5 centimeters in height or as large as a typical Terran. The hologram player can be hooked into a hologram recorder (capable of storing three-dimensional images), or even to a unicom (p. 148) to receive three-dimensional images for real-time communications.



## HOLOGRAM RECORDER

A hologram recorder is a cylinder no larger than a pen with a bulbous, transparent cap on one end. The device can make a three-dimensional recording of anything within its cone-shaped recording area. Hologram recorders can store up to one hour of three-dimensional images to be played back on a hologram player or transferred to a computer as video data. Most hologram recorders can also be attached to a unicom (p. 148) to serve as a video input device for real-time holographic communications. Law enforcement agents commonly carry the hologram recorder, as it allows for the accurate collection of evidence and can prevent abuse on the part of the authorities.

## HOLOGUISE

The hologuise is a combination hologram projector and digital imaging computer system that is worn like a headband over the forehead. When activated, the hologuise projects a three-dimensional image over the face that completely obscures the character's natural features. This image is commonly a different face, but can be a black veil or some other decorative image instead. With practical and fashionable uses, the wealthy elites of the Core worlds regularly employ hologuises, as do criminals and spies. An active hologuise grants the wearer a +4 bonus on all Performance (Disguise) tests.

## INTELLIPICKS

Though not technically an actual set of lockpicks, intellipicks are a cluster of several tiny machines (though not quite small enough to be called nanites) that can pick almost any lock and open almost any door. Intellipicks come in a small box that, when placed on the lock to be opened, releases the miniscule robots to do their work. Once the intellipicks penetrate the lock, they move tumblers and shift bolts in an efficient and rapid manner, opening the lock in way that no human could. Intellipicks should be treated as having a TN 15, but only for the purposes of opening conventional locks. Intellipicks cannot open electronic or computerized locks, though they can open magnetic locks by generating a magnetic field of opposite polarity.

## MICRO-AURAL COMMUNICATOR (MICROCOM)

The micro-aural communicator consists of three components. A tiny earpiece transmits incoming communications directly into the ear, at a volume far too low to allow others to hear. A small node placed on the inside of the lip allows the user to broadcast while speaking no louder than a whisper. Finally, a wristband functions as the input/output port for hooking other devices into the microcom. Using a microcom cannot be heard by any normal means.

## NANOBEACON

An invaluable device used in tracking and search and rescue, the nanobeacon is a small microchip that is placed on a target's body (or on an object). It sends out a pulse every second that can be detected by sensors attuned to the beacon's frequency. The nanobeacon projects its pulse at up to a 800-kilometer radius, each nanobeacon with its own unique identification code. Nanobeacons are often used to coordinate combat squads, track wanted criminals, and even to help recover kidnapped or lost children. A beacon can be placed on any character or object by making a simple touch attack against the target.



## POLYVOX

The polyvox translates the languages of different known cultures and species.

## VIZIERO

The viziero allows a person to see through solid objects. Through a combination motion-sensor data, gravity fluctuations, ambient light penetration, x-rays and ultraviolet light, heat and infrared signatures, sound waves and sonar, and other sensory inputs, the viziero creates an accurate computer-rendered image of what lies beyond intervening objects. Any character wearing a viziero may, as an action, activate its sensors and see through a wall, floor, object, or creature at a range of up to 30 meters.

The viziero can penetrate 15 centimeters of metal (except lead, which it cannot see through) and 30 centimeters of other materials, including concrete, wood, and plaster.

## POWER BACKPACK

The power backpack is essentially a portable generator. While worn, the power backpack can replace the power packs used by laser and plasma weapons, granting an infinite supply of ammunition while attached. Additionally, the power backpack can provide energy to almost any device requiring electrical power.

## ŞAFISTO CHIP

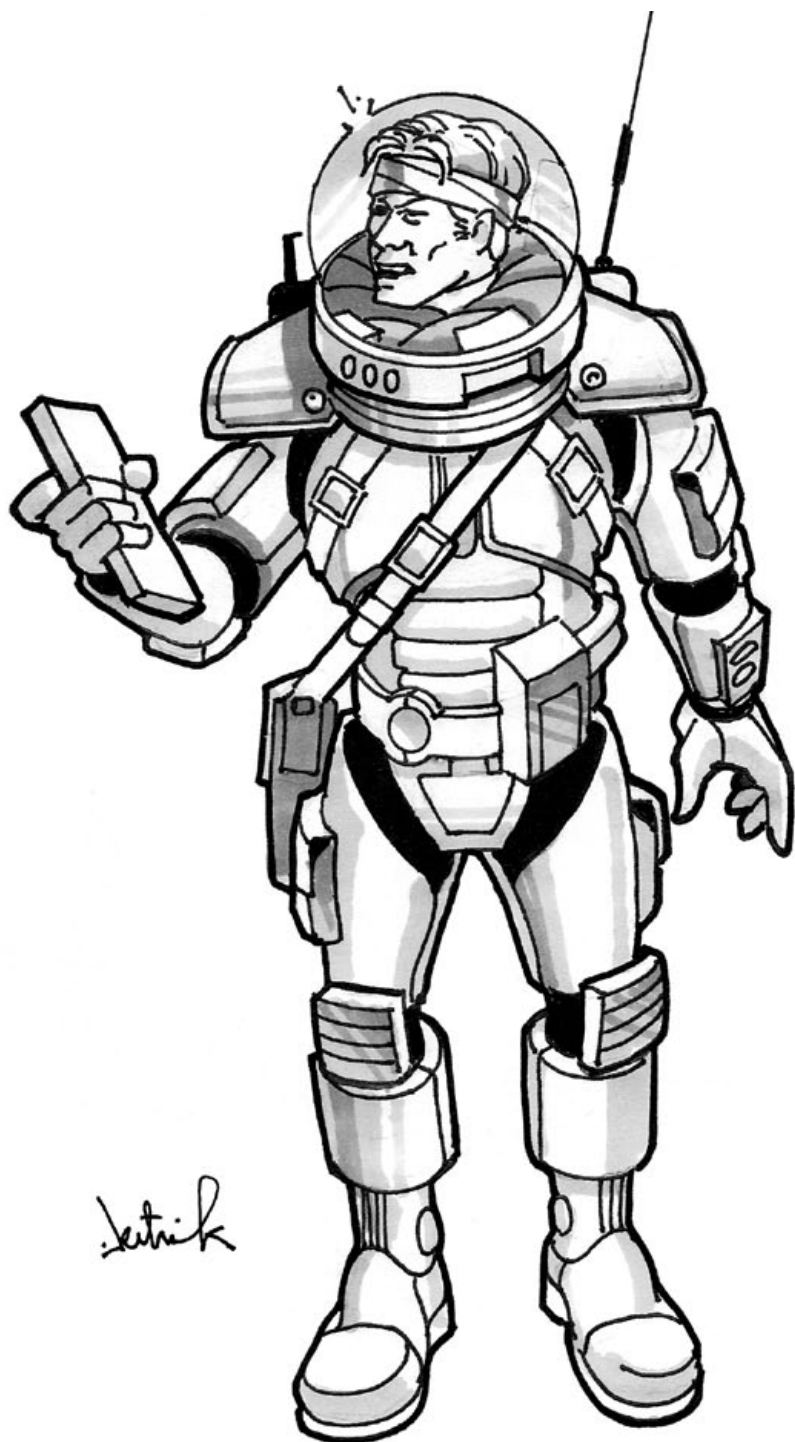
The şafisto chip is a tiny microchip implanted beneath the surface of the wrist. It contains the bearer's identification information. Some computers can read the şafisto chip and extract its information, while all şafisto chips can be made to receive another person's identification information via handshake — once a mere method of greeting, the handshake becomes a permanent way to introduce and clearly identify oneself to another person. Of course, the şafisto chip can be made to not broadcast information via handshake for privacy's sake.

In addition to basic identification information, many people in the Thousand Suns, especially in the Core worlds, have their banking and credit information keyed to their şafisto chips. Businesses love this as it allows them to prevent shoplifting; if a person carries an item from the store, that item's value is immediately deducted from their bank account. Additionally, at higher tech levels the şafisto chip can be linked to computers (particularly neural implants) such that any information can be transferred between two şafisto chips — a great boon to the espionage community as it allows for discrete information transfers.

Some governments use şafisto chips (occasionally combined with nanobeacons) to monitor the activities of their citizens. This oppressive, watchful eye of the government is exactly what opponents of the şafisto chip fear. Additionally, a black market for forged or stolen şafisto chips emerged as soon as the chips themselves became widespread, making identity theft and falsification an ever-present crime in some communities.

## SPRAY LCD

The rise to prominence of paint-on LCDs allowed many people freedom and portability with computing never before felt. The spray LCD is the logical extension of this technology. A pressurized canister similar to a can of spray paint, it can spray an LCD onto almost any surface. Any object coated with spray LCD automatically gains the benefits of the paint-on LCD for 1 hour. After that hour, the spray begins to dissolve and no longer functions. Each canister of spray LCD is enough to produce one working LCD.



Exploring a moon's surface wearing a space suit.

## SENSOR EQUIPMENT

Specialized sensor equipment can be great aids to individuals in a wide variety of occupations. Here are just a few examples of such equipment.

### MECHANICOMP

The mechanicomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and repairs of mechanical devices. Thanks to the mechanicomp's extensive library of mechanical blueprints, any repairs made using the mechanicomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences tests made to vehicles, starships, or mechanical devices.

### MEDICOMP

The medicomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and healing of Terran and other common physiologies. Thanks to the medicomp's extensive library of medical records and biological knowledge, any treatments administered using the medicomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 bonus on all Medical Sciences tests.

### MOTION

The motion sensor is capable of not only detecting motion but also of plotting it on a display screen in relation to other objects. The motion sensor plots motion relative to its own position, but can sense motion through walls and solid surfaces, indicating the location of any moving object within 30 meters.

### ROBOCOMP

The robocomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and repairs of robots and robotic life forms. Thanks to the robocomp's extensive library of robotic blueprints, any repairs made using the robocomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences tests made to robots.

## SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT

Though most species are adaptable to a wide variety of environments, it never hurts to have technological assistance in braving the dangers of inhospitable worlds. Here are a few examples of survival equipment that does just that.

### AQUACONVERTER

Also known as "mechanical gills," the aquaconverter is a simple device that takes in water, separates its molecules into hydrogen and oxygen atoms, and then feeds the oxygen into a breather tube and the hydrogen into power-generating mechanisms. Worn as a backpack with a breather tube placed in the mouth, the aquaconverter is a limitless and self-powering way to breathe safely underwater.

### PORTABLE ENVIRONMENT GENERATOR

As an important piece of survival gear that can be taken on almost any expedition, the portable environment generator is an all-in-one device coveted by explorers and outdoors enthusiasts alike. Resembling a tall cylinder roughly 60 centimeters in height, the portable environment generator can project a 10-meter sphere of custom environment under any

TABLE 8—4: Equipment

| Type                     | Cost                     | Tech Level |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Aquaconverter            | 275\$                    | VI         |
| Biosculpt Kit, Personal  | 150\$                    | VI         |
| Chemical, Akcel          | 40\$                     | VI         |
| Chemical, Antitox        | 40\$                     | VI         |
| Chemical, Biocort        | 40\$                     | VII        |
| Chemical, Mortinta       | 20\$                     | VII        |
| Chemical, Neutrad        | 40\$                     | VI         |
| Chemical, Plastiflesh    | 40\$                     | VIII       |
| Chemical, Psi Enhancer   | Bonus squared<br>x 100\$ | VII        |
| Chemical, Psi Stamina    | 100\$                    | VII        |
| Chemical, Psi Suppressor | 200\$                    | VII        |
| Chemical, Rapide         | 120\$                    | VII        |
| Chemical, Solvaway       | 30\$                     | VI         |
| Chemical, Sporekill      | 40\$                     | VI         |
| Chemical, Truthtell      | 70\$                     | VIII       |
| Disguise Kit, Morpich    | 200\$                    | VI         |
| Display Contacts         | 650\$                    | VI         |
| Display Glasses          | 200\$                    | V          |
| Duracable                | 20\$                     | V          |
| Flash-Seal               | 70\$                     | VI         |
| Fusion Torch             | 120\$                    | VI         |
| Grappler Tag             | 30\$                     | V          |
| Heads-Up Display         | 55\$                     | V          |
| Hologram Player          | 40\$                     | VIII       |
| Hologram Recorder        | 90\$                     | VIII       |

TABLE 8—4: Equipment

| Type                           | Cost               | Tech Level |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Hologuise                      | 500\$              | VIII       |
| Intellipicks                   | 275\$              | VI         |
| Karto                          | 3500\$             | VI         |
| Kodumulo                       | 350\$              | V          |
| Medkit, Advanced               | 60\$               | VI         |
| Medkit, Fast Use               | 55\$               | VI         |
| Micro-Aural Communicator       | 40\$               | VIII       |
| Nanobeacon                     | 70\$               | V          |
| Neural Computer Link           | 5000\$             | VIII       |
| Neural Network Jack, Wireless  | 200\$              | VIII       |
| Polyvox                        | 120\$              | VIII       |
| Portable Environment Generator | 275\$              | V          |
| Portable Glow-Lamp             | 20\$               | V          |
| Power Backpack                 | 70\$               | VII        |
| Puritizer                      | 90\$               | V          |
| Regen Wand                     | 1200\$             | VIII       |
| Šafisto Chip                   | 200\$              | V          |
| Sensor, Mechanicomp            | 1200\$             | VII        |
| Sensor, Medicomp               | 1200\$             | VII        |
| Sensor, Robocomp               | 1200\$             | VII        |
| Sensor, Motion                 | 350\$              | VI         |
| Spray LCD                      | 70\$               | V          |
| Standard Rations               | 30\$<br>(per week) | VI         |
| Universal Communicator         | 40\$               | VI         |
| Viziero                        | 500\$              | VII        |

conditions. In cold weather areas, the generator produces heat. In arid deserts, the generator produces both cool air and moisture.

At night, the generator acts as a glow lamp and provides the area with light. Thanks to a special energy bubble produced by the generator, any atmospheric changes stay within the 10-meter radius and do not escape until the device is deactivated. Essentially, the portable environment generator can produce a sphere inside which a group of people can be relatively comfortable despite extremely harsh conditions outside the generator's influence.

## PORTABLE GLOW-LAMP

The portable glow-lamp is the most efficient and beneficial form of lighting equipment known to man. It can function as a directional lighting device (like a flashlight) or as an area-covering lantern. Glow-lamps have long-lasting power cells and bulbs that never need to be replaced, and can be adjusted to provide light in any radius up to 15 meters.

## PURITIZER

The puritizer is a small, semitransparent cylinder roughly one foot tall that removes impurities from water and food. The puritizer's on-board computer recognizes chemicals that can be harmful to the human body and separates them from the food and drink.

## STANDARD RATIONS

The standard rations of advanced militaries are entire meals that come in pill form. The pill is placed under the tongue and dissolves, releasing not only the flavors of various foods but also the consumer's daily supply of nutrients and vitamins. Each ration is the equivalent of a single meal and is nutritious, filling, and relatively appetizing.

## UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATOR (UNICOM)

The unicom is an all-in-one piece of equipment that handles the communication needs of a single person. Each unicom has its own frequency and can send transmissions both directly to another individual unicom as well as to an entire group of unicoms. The unicom also has a data port so that it can be linked to a computer system and receive data as well as audio and visual communications. At higher tech levels, the unicom also frequently incorporates the hologram recorder and projector devices.

# CYBERNETIC DEVICES

Two kinds of cybernetic devices exist in the Thousand Suns: replacements and enhancements. Neither is particularly common, since cloned body parts and other biological options are available and are generally viewed more favorably by Terran culture (see *Replacements*, p. 149). GMs are advised to take care when allowing characters to obtain cybernetic devices, as some of them may increase their effectiveness beyond what the GM desires for his campaign.

**Replacements:** Replacements are prosthetic or artificial units intended to replace lost limbs and damaged organs. Common replacements provide no benefits other than duplicating the essential functions of their biological counterparts, and they present little strain on the beneficiary's overall well-being. In appearance, a cybernetic replacement can be recognizably artificial or virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

**Enhancements:** Enhancements bestow new abilities or improve the recipient in some fashion. Enhancements include skeletal reinforcement, subcutaneous communications hardware, and weapon mounts. Some enhancements have visible external components, while others are hidden beneath the skin. Enhancements put more of a drain on the body's resources, and recipients frequently suffer debilitating physical or mental side effects.

## CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

Cybernetic devices are complex instruments with both electrical and mechanical components. Repairing a damaged or nonfunctional cybernetic attachment requires 10 hours of work and a successful Technical Sciences test. A character needs both an electrical tool kit and a mechanical tool kit to facilitate repairs. Without one or the other, a character takes a -2 penalty on the test; without both kits, the penalty increases to -4.

## INSTALLATION AND REMOVAL

Installing or removing a cybernetic device, regardless of whether it's a replacement or enhancement, requires a successful Medical Sciences test. Removing a cybernetic attachment without proper surgery causes lasting physical trauma to the patient's body, permanently lowering his Body score by 1 per attachment removed.

## NUMBER OF ATTACHMENTS

Only living creatures can have cybernetic attachments. In addition, a living creature can have a maximum number of cybernetic attachments equal to the creature's  $([Body + Will] \div 2)$ . For each one beyond its limit, a creature takes a -1 penalty to all skill tests. Furthermore, espers lose the ability to use one psi power of the highest rank he possesses (player's choice). These losses persist until additional attachments beyond the limit are removed.

## ELECTRICAL VULNERABILITY

A creature with one or more cybernetic attachments takes 50% more damage from any attack that deals electricity damage.

## REPLACEMENTS

By the time of Thousand Suns, technology has advanced to the point where it has become possible to use cloning technology to grow specific organs without first creating a viable embryo. Scientists are able to stimulate cells in the lab so that they spontaneously develop into a liver, lung, or kidney. This eliminates the need for organ donation and make possible huge advances in the science of organ transplantation. Unlike the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cloned replacement organs are available in the Thousand Suns whenever they are needed and match the recipient exactly, down to the last chromosome. (This has the added bonus of practically eliminating the chance of the body rejecting the new organ.) Cloning can also replace much of the need for blood banks, since doctors can clone as much replacement blood as necessary. Some stores of donated blood remain necessary, though, for use in times of emergency.

Cloning a replacement organ can take anywhere from days to hours, depending on the availability of the necessary medical technology. Generally, the Core worlds possess the most advanced hospitals and equipment, while the Marches (let alone Wildspace) are much more likely to have archaic or at least out of date medical systems. Cloning blood can take anywhere from hours to seconds, again depending on the availability of the necessary medical technology, which is often heavily dependent on the location of the world on which the hospital is located.

## ENHANCEMENTS

Unlike standard replacements, cybernetic enhancements bestow new abilities upon their recipients. Unless otherwise noted, enhancements don't add measurably to a recipient's weight.

Each enhancement description includes the following information:

**Benefit:** What the cybernetic enhancement allows its recipient to do.

**Type:** Enhancements can be external or internal.

**Base Cost:** The cost of the enhancement (or the components to build it).

### BODY REPAIR WEAVE

A delicate weave of subdermal biowires stimulates and repairs the body's damaged tissue.

**Benefit:** The recipient heals naturally at twice the normal rate.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2750\$.

### DATA ARCHIVE

A data archive is a microcomputer implanted in the recipient's skull. It contains skill-related information stored on a series of biological data chips, or biochips.

**Benefit:** The recipient gains access to an information database that grants a +2 bonus on all Perception-based skills.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 6500\$.

### INITIATIVE IMPLANT

The initiative implant consists of a series of wires threaded around the recipient's spinal cord and attached to the recipient's nervous system. The implant stimulates faster response times. This implant is considered military grade and may be difficult to obtain legally.

**Benefit:** The recipient gains a +1 bonus to his Initiative Rating (see **Chapter 6**).

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2000\$.

### INJECTOR UNIT

This unit, attached the recipient's forearm or thigh, incorporates three medical hypo-syringes. Upon command, the unit can inject any or all of the medicinal substances into the recipient's bloodstream.

**Benefit:** The injector unit has three built-in hypos, and each hypo holds a single dose of one of the following medicinal chemicals: akcel, antitox, neutrad, sporekill, or biocort. As an action, the recipient can contract his muscles to inject himself with any or all of these hypos, gaining the benefits immediately. A drained hypo can be removed and replaced as an action.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 500\$ (medical hypos must be purchased separately).

### NIGHTVISION OPTICS

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that enable the character to see better in the dark. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit.

**Benefit:** The recipient can see clearly in darkness out to a range of 20 meters.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 1500\$.



## SKILL IMPLANT

This small brain implant enables its recipient to perform a specific skill more adroitly.

**Benefit:** The recipient gains a +2 bonus on tests made with one known skill of his choice. Different skills require different implants, and a skill implant cannot be modified to grant a bonus to another skill. A recipient may have multiple skill implants, but each is considered a separate cybernetic attachment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2000\$.

## SKILL PLEXUS

This unit, implanted in the recipient's brain, allows multiple skill implants to function as a single cybernetic attachment (see Skill Implant, above).

**Benefit:** The recipient may have up to four skill implants attached to the skill plexus, and together they are treated as a single cybernetic attachment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 9000\$ (does not include skill implants).

## STABILIZER

A stabilizer releases chemical coagulants into a dying recipient's bloodstream to prevent excess blood loss, effectively stabilizing him. A stabilizer is usually installed near the recipient's heart.

**Benefit:** If reduced to 0 Vitality, the recipient automatically stabilizes (see *Damage*, p. 97).

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 3500\$.

## SUBCUTANEOUS BODY ARMOR

Subcutaneous body armor consists of small plates of flexible armor implanted under the recipient's skin.

**Benefit:** The character gains a natural armor value. The value depends on the density of the armor: Light 5, Medium 10, Heavy 15. This armor value does not stack with worn armor from any other source. Subcutaneous body armor of any sort does not grant a dissipation value, however.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** Light 500\$, Medium 2000\$, or Heavy 9000\$.

## SUBCUTANEOUS COMMUNICATOR

The recipient has a small transceiver installed underneath the skin of her throat. The transceiver is connected to a tiny speaker located in the recipient's ear.

**Benefit:** The recipient may carry on conversations using the subcutaneous communicator without raising his voice above a whisper; Observe tests made to hear the recipient suffer a -4 penalty. The tiny speaker implanted in the recipient's ear enables her to hear the other side of the conversation, but others cannot.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 650\$.



Steele Unlimited PA-9mm Automatic Pistol.

## TARGETING OPTICS

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that use a projected targeting reticle to improve the recipient's aim. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit. This implant is considered military grade and may be difficult to obtain legally. This implant does not stack with other ocular implants.

**Benefit:** Targeting optics grant a +1 bonus on all attacks made with ranged weapons.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 900\$

## TELESCOPIC OPTICS

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that simulate the effects of binoculars, enabling the recipient to perceive distant objects more easily. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit. This implant does not stack with other ocular implants.

**Benefit:** Telescopic optics reduce range penalties by -1 for every range increment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 500\$.

# ROBOTS

Robots are extremely uncommon among most cultures of the Thousand Suns. This is due, in part, to the effects of the Von Neumann Wars, which has left Terran society with a lingering distrust of robots in general and artificially intelligent ones in particular. Nevertheless, robots are used in a few areas. What follows are descriptions of a few common robot models.

*THOUSAND SUNS: TECHNOLOGY* includes a lengthier treatment of robotics, including rules for robot construction.

## PERSONAL ASSISTANT ROBOT

**Cost:** 17,870\$

**Tech Level:** VI

Designed to replace the traditional secretary or executive assistant, this robot is built on a biomorph frame with a roughly humanoid and bipedal shape. PA robots are often painted, chromed, gilded, or otherwise decorated to individual tastes. The vocalizer may be programmed from a selection of male and female voices considered to be esthetically pleasing to most species in the Thousand Suns. PA robots are often programmed with multiple language chips, allowing the 'bot to act as a translator in situations involving representatives from multiple cultures.

**Body:** 8 ■ **Dexterity:** 7 ■ **Perception:** 6 ■ **Presence:** 2 ■ **Will:** 2 ■ **Vitality:** 40

**Skills:** Bureaucracy 8, Computers 8, Languages 10\*, Profession (Personal Assistant) 8, Social Sciences (Linguistics) 12

**Frame:** Biomorph

**Size:** Medium

**Locomotion:** Legs (Pair)

**Manipulators:** Hands (2)

**Sensors:** Type 4 (Audio, Olfactory, Tactile, Visual; +2 bonus to Observe tests)

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Accessories:** AV Recorder, AV Transmitter, Integrated Videophone, Vocalizer

\*Includes major galactic languages and dialects; additional languages chosen by robot's owner

## MOBILE REPAIR DRONE

**Cost:** 15,625\$

**Tech Level:** Class VII

This small robot is designed to access, maintain and repair equipment that are in locations that would be difficult or dangerous for a sapient mechanic. In cases of particularly arcane or delicate repairs, a broadband audiovisual and control link allows an operator to conduct the repair from a safe location. Magnetic clamps allow the drone to clamp onto nearby equipment or hulls for stability, and multi-function hands optimized for repair tasks provide flexibility.

**Body:** 6 ■ **Dexterity:** 8 ■ **Perception:** 8 ■ **Presence:** 2 ■ **Will:** 2 ■ **Vitality:** 30

**Skills:** Computers 8, Technical Sciences 12

**Frame:** Armature

**Size:** Small

**Locomotion:** Thruster

**Manipulators:** Task Hands (2)\*

**Sensors:** Type 8 (Audio, Olfactory, Tactile, Visual; +2 bonus to Observe and Technical Sciences tests; +2 bonus to Initiative Rating)

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Accessories:** AV Recorder, Internal Storage Unit, Magnetic Feet, Robolink, Survivor Array

\*Task hands optimized to provide +2 bonus to Technical Sciences skill tests.

## SECURITY ROBOT

**Cost:** 7545\$

**Tech Level:** V

This robot looks vaguely like a Terran-sized, mechanical guard dog with four powerful legs, wicked jaws, and armor covering its body. It growls and barks at intruders with the aid of a vocalizer. The robot is used as a watchdog on many worlds in the Marches and Wildspace and can only be mistaken for an actual dog at distances of 30 meters or more.

**Body:** 9 ■ **Dexterity:** 6 ■ **Perception:** 6 ■ **Presence:** 2 ■ **Will:** 2 ■ **Vitality:** 45

**Skills:** Athletics 6, Observe 6, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 2

**Frame:** Armature

**Size:** Medium

**Locomotion:** Legs (4)

**Manipulators:** Jaws

**Sensors:** Type 3 (Audio, Olfactory, Visual)

**Armor:** Alumisteel (AV 25)

**Weapons:** Bite: DV 3 (40)

**Accessories:** AV Recorder, Robolink, Vocalizer

## VON NEUMANN INFILTRATOR

**Cost:** 48,970\$

**Tech Level:** VII

Robots of this type are among the most sophisticated in all of the Thousand Suns, having been designed by artificial intelligences that survived the Von Neumann Wars by fleeing into Wildspace, where they now plot the downfall of all organic lifeforms. These infiltrators are constructed to look like members of biological species so that they can act as spies, assassins, and saboteurs. The model presented here looks like a Terran, but can be used to represent an infiltrator of almost any outward appearance.

**Body:** 8 ■ **Dexterity:** 7 ■ **Presence:** 5 ■ **Perception:** 5 ■ **Will:** 5 ■ **Vitality:** 40

**Skills:** 4 Skills at rank 4 each, 4 skills at rank 8 each (as appropriate to the infiltrator's mission)

**Frame:** Synthetic

**Size:** Medium

**Locomotion:** Legs (Pair)

**Manipulators:** Advanced Hand (2)

**Sensors:** Tye 8 (Audio, Olfactory, Tactile, Visual; +2 bonus to Observe and Technical Sciences tests; +2 bonus to Initiative Rating)

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** Fist: DV 2 (20) or weapon

**Accessories:** Polyvox, Vocalizer

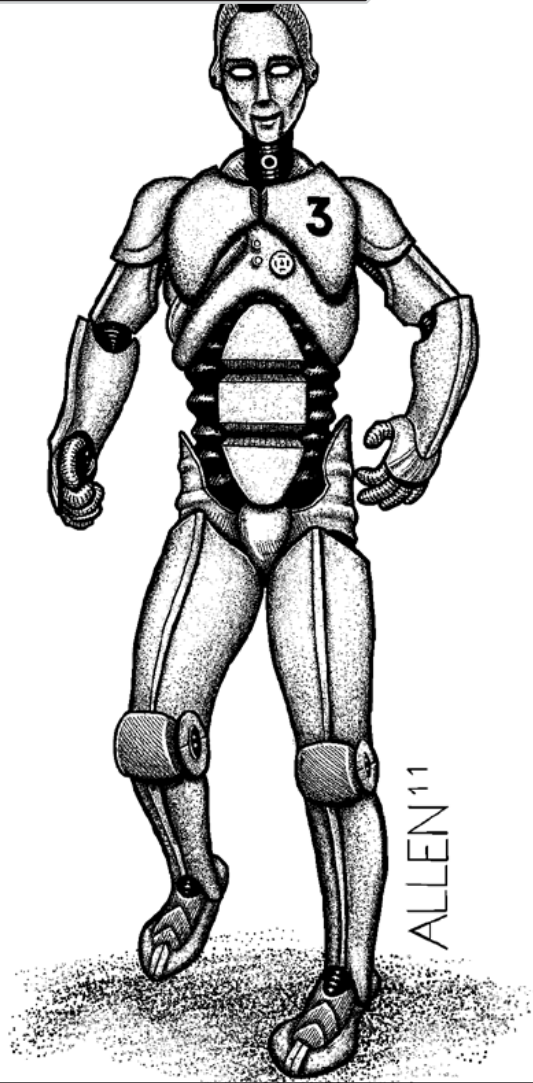
## WAR DRONE

**Cost:** 13,420\$

**Tech Level:** VI

The Hen Jaa war drone is a comparatively cheap military robot constructed by the Hen Jaa and sold to clients in Wildspace, as well as to terrorists and insurgents elsewhere in the Thousand Suns. This robot resembles a mechanical Hen Jaa, clad head-to-toe in interlocking duralloy plates. The robot's tentacles can be used for grappling or carrying items. It usually carries a laser rifle. The Hen Jaa also build other more impressive military robots for their own use.

PH-1220 Personal Assistant Robot.



**Body:** 8 ■ **Dexterity:** 7 ■ **Perception:** 5 ■ **Presence:** 3 ■ **Will:** 5 ■ **Vitality:** 40

**Skills:** Athletics 8, Investigate 4, Observe 8, Shoot 5

**Frame:** Android

**Size:** Medium

**Locomotion:** Tentacles

**Manipulators:** Claws (3)

**Sensors:** Type 6 (Audio, Olfactory, Tactile, Visual; +2 bonus to Observe tests; +1 bonus to Initiative Rating)

**Armor:** Duralloy (AV 40)

**Weapons:** Claw: DV 3 (30); a Tech Level VI weapon, usually laser rifle

**Accessories:** Magnetic Feet, Vocalizer



An early Terran space station in its decaying orbit.

# CHAPTER 9: STARSHIPS AND VEHICLES

"Any sort of ship you have to learn to pilot: it takes a long time, a new set of reflexes, a different and artificial way of thinking. Even riding a bicycle demands an acquired skill, very different from walking, whereas a spaceship — oh, brother! I won't live that long. Spaceships are for acrobats who are also mathematicians."

— Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (1959)



# CHAPTER 9: STARSHIPS AND VEHICLES

Starships are what make the interstellar civilization of the Thousand Suns possible. Thanks to the creation of the Dillingham Drive, often called simply the D-Drive, ships can travel from world to world despite the vast distances between stars. Although the principles behind the D-Drive are not widely understood, even by many who regularly jump from system to system, this technology has proven safe and reliable over the centuries since Terrans first left their homeworld.

D-Drive travel is slow, though far faster than many believed possible in earlier eras before the breakthroughs in physics that made faster-than-light travel a reality. Jumps are measured in weeks, with the longest jumps taking as long as three standard months. Consequently, many interstellar travelers resort to the use of drugs such as *rapide* or *mortinta* (see *Chemicals and Drugs*, p. 138) to sidestep the worst effects of such long interstellar journeys.

The length of an interstellar jump seems to bear no relationship to the distance between the two stars in real space. The underlying logic – if any – between actual interstellar distances and the length of travel through D-space (the alternate reality into which D-Drive capable ships jump to reach their real space destinations) remains unknown. What has been determined is that the length of travel remains constant and that jumps are only possible from certain “jump points” within a given system, which in turn lead to other star systems, creating a “web” of jump lines throughout the Thousand Suns.

D-Drive vessels remain the fastest means of sending information from world to world, meaning that most planets must wait weeks before receiving news from adjacent systems, let alone from ones farther away. Interstellar governments rule lightly by necessity, allowing significant local autonomy unless circumstances require otherwise. The same holds true for military organizations, whose ships are often weeks away from headquarters, meaning that individual initiative is demanded while on patrol far from home.

## How does the D-Drive Work?

*THOUSAND SUNS* provides no answer to this question, because there is no answer that could either stand up to serious scientific scrutiny or would satisfy every player. FTL drives are one of those things that divide science fiction fans, most of whom have their own ideas and theories about how they might work. On principle, *THOUSAND SUNS* offers no definitive explanation of the physics behind the Dillingham Drive. Beyond the fact that D-Drive vessels can only travel along pre-determined jump lines and, while traveling, they are outside real space and located in some other dimension known as D-space, this game is agnostic. Game Masters are encouraged to come up with their own explanations and interpretations to make *THOUSAND SUNS* own game, right down to how this or any other technology works.

# STARSHIP COMBAT

It is in the space surrounding star systems where starship combat takes place; such combat is impossible in D-Space. The rules governing ship combat presented here are straightforward enough to quickly run space battles on the tabletop. They cover battles involving comparatively small numbers of vessels of the sort player characters are likely to own, pilot, or face off against. The supplement *THOUSAND SUNS: STARSHIPS* describe a more extensive system for starship combat, as well as rules for creating new starship designs or modifying existing ones. For most campaigns, the simpler rules presented here should suffice.

## SHIP STATS

All ships, regardless of type, have the same stats. No matter how big, or small they are, they have a few things in common.

### OFFENSE MODIFIER

Offense Modifier (OM) is a general indication of a ship's combat effectiveness. OM is an abstraction, representing a variety of factors, from the ease with which it can be piloted in combat to the power and precision of its targeting computers. All ships have a base OM that is used to modify the attack rolls of all its weapons.

### DEFENSE MODIFIER

Defense Modifier (DM) is used to determine how difficult others find it to hit a ship. Like OM, DM is an abstraction. It is the sum of many parts and takes into account the ability of a ship's tactical computers to devise evasive strategies as well as its general size. All ships have a base DM that is used to resist attacks against them.

### HULL

All ships have a Hull rating, which represents its material superstructure and functional capacity.

### MOVE

All ships have Move, which represents how many spans the ship can move each round. Thus, if a ship has a Move 6, the ship can move forward six spans. For more on movement, see p. 161.

### TURN

Turn indicates how many degrees a ship can move in a round. For more on turning, see p. 161.

### CREW

The Crew represents how many people it takes to operate the ship.

### COST

This represents the cost of the ship in millions of sols.

### WEAPONS

The number and types of weapons a ship possesses. Weapons listed as "linked" are fired in groups of two. They require only a single attack roll. If successful, the damage is multiplied by two. If unsuccessful, both linked weapons miss. Both linked weapons may only be fired at a single target. A ship which is attacked by a weapon which is capable of automatic fire, such

as a needle driver, has its Defensive Modifier reduced by one half, with fractions rounded down. This reflects the difficulty inherent in dodging multiple rounds fired at the same time.

## DAMAGE CONTROL

Damage control represents the ability to repair the ship during combat as well as the presence of redundant and diagnostic systems. The number listed is the multiplier used for the degrees of success obtained from a repair test. See p. 165 for more information.

## CARGO

This value represents the starship's cargo capacity in displacement tons.

# ROUNDS, SPANS, AND FIGHTING RANGE

There are three important terms in starship combat; they are the round, the span, and fighting range.

## ROUND

As in personal combat, the length of a round is arbitrary but is comparatively longer, lasting approximately 3–6 minutes. This better reflects the pace of starship combat and the distances and speeds involved. Given an implied reliance on automation and computers, multiple action penalties are not automatically imposed during ship combat.

## SPAN

The span is the basic unit of distance in ship combat. Its use is intended to simplify both movement and combat by eliminating the need to deal in distances ranging into thousands and millions of kilometers.

## FIGHTING RANGE

A ship can only engage in combat when within fighting range, that is 12 spans, of an opponent. This includes combat using missiles. Delays in the receipt and processing of sensor data coupled with trying to predict where a maneuvering target will be at a point several minutes into the future imposes a limit on the effective range of combat. Any ship that moves more than 12 spans away from its opponents is considered to have fled the combat and may safely escape should its pilot wish to do so.

# COMBAT

Ship combat proceeds in rounds and each round has two stages; movement and engagement. Once the movement of all ships has been taken care of, vessels may engage each other with weapons. Although played sequentially, any damage resulting from combat is assessed and applied simultaneously by all participants at the end of the round. Prior to the first round of ship combat, an Initiative Rating is calculated for each participant, just as it is for personal combat.

## INITIATIVE

Initiative is determined on a per ship basis with the ship's captain rolling to determine the Initiative Rating. The formula for the roll is similar to the one used in personal combat:

$$1D12 + [(Will + Perception) \div 2 \text{ (rounded down)}] \pm \text{modifiers} = \text{Initiative Rating}$$

Modifiers are imposed by the GM to account for things such as surprise or environmental factors, such as might exist in the upper atmosphere of a gas giant. If one or more players get the same result, re-roll for initiative.

Once the order of Initiative has been determined it remains fixed throughout the combat. A player may choose to delay to a later point, which then becomes that ship's new Initiative rating.

## MOVEMENT

Space is vast.

This vastness allows a ship to move not only forward, but up and down as well. To represent this vertical movement, two 12-sided dice of different colors are used. One die represents "Up," and the other represents "Down."

Why 12-sided dice? Firstly, they are the dice needed to play *THOUSAND SUNS*. Still, more importantly, 12 Spans or less is considered fighting range. Once a ship passes beyond 12 Spans, combat is typically over.

Each ship moves in reverse Initiative Rating order; the lowest rated ship goes first followed by the next lowest and so on. This gives higher rated ships the advantage of knowing how their opponents will move, helping them to shape the battle to their own ends. The ship's captain is responsible for deciding how the ship will move.

A ship's Move Rating defines how many spans it can alter its speed within a round. A ship with Move 4 can change speed anywhere from zero to four spans during that combat turn. Movement is cumulative from round to round, because objects in motion in space stay in motion unless they act or are acted upon. For example, a ship which moved 4 spans last round will continue to move 4 spans in a straight line this round. If in the next round it increases its speed by two more Move, it will now cover 6 Spans per round until it acts to change speed again. The ship is described as now having a Move *value* of 6. In order to slow down, a ship can apply Move in the opposite direction of travel, thereby reducing the number of spans it traverses per round. Using the above example, the ship going 6 spans per round could apply its full Move 4 to reduce its movement to 2.

Vertical movement uses the same basic rules as horizontal movement. A ship can maneuver up and down by spans based on its current Move value and Move rating to do so. The vertical distance between ships is included in any calculation of fighting range. For example, if two ships are only 2 spans apart horizontally but one is "Up" 6 and the other "Down" 5, then they are 13 Spans away from each other and no longer within fighting range.

A ship can use any combination of its Move rating to alter its position vertically and/or horizontally. However, any Move value carried over from the previous round is retained as forward motion and cannot be applied to climbing, diving or turning. The difference between a ship's current Move value and any Move rating used is applied as forward motion in the existing direction of flight. An example of this is a ship Moving 6 spans per round at the start of the round which possesses a Move rating of 4. It can change direction by 4 spans but still must move forward 2 spans first due to the speed "left over" from the previous round.

Please note that there is an exception to this rule in the case of ships with a Move value of at least 1 and a Turn rating of 45°. They are required to first move one span in the current direction of travel for every span moved up, down or to one side to reflect their maneuverability limitations. This rule does not apply when the ship starts the round at rest.

The movement cost for a ship to turn is 1 Move for every 45° change in direction; the ship's Turn rating defines the limit to the number of turns which can be made in a round. For example, a ship with a Turn rating of 135° would spend 3 Move in order to "pay" for the

three 45° turns it made. Points of Move used to turn a ship or make it climb or dive are not added to the current Move value.

There are two things to keep in mind with regard to ship movement. First, a ship's direction of travel and how it is oriented have no bearing on each other. A ship may turn freely around its center of mass in any, or even all, of its three axes as it maneuvers (In fact a round is sufficiently long that it could do so multiple times). This enables a ship to potentially bring all of its weapons to bear during each combat turn. Therefore there are no such things as "firing arcs" in *THOUSAND SUNS*. Second, a ship which begins a round at rest may freely choose which direction it will move in at no cost in Move.

## HITTING A TARGET

Combat proceeds in Initiative Rating order from the highest rated ship to the lowest. In order to determine whether or not a hit is obtained in combat, a Gunnery test is performed for each weapon fired. The Gunnery test is calculated as follows:

- The gunner's **Gunnery TN**
- **weapon range** modifiers
- + the attacking ship's **Offensive Modifiers (OMs)**
- + any successes from the attacking pilot's **Piloting test**
- ± **GM imposed modifiers**
- the **Defensive Modifiers (DMs)** of the defending ship and any successes from the defending pilot's **Piloting test**

Each weapon on a ship can be fired once per round. A ship can fire a number of missiles within a round equal to the Gunnery rank of the ship's gunner(s). A gunner who attempts to fire more than one type of weapon during a round will incur a –2 multiple action penalty for each additional weapon type after the first. For purposes of this rule, a laser and a heavy laser would count as different types of weapons.

## COMBAT BETWEEN MULTIPLE SHIPS

All combat within a round is conducted between two ships at one time, an attacker and a defender. Even if multiple ships are present on one or both sides, combat is always handled one-on-one. A ship may freely divide its fire between targets however it sees fit, subject to the limits on weapons fire given in the section above.

## RANGE

All weapons have a range, listed in a number of spans. Ranges are short, medium, and long. If a target falls outside of a weapon's range, that weapon is unable to hit the target. Weapons might have different distances for each range band, but the penalties are all the same.

**TABLE 9–1: Range**

| Range  | Modifier |
|--------|----------|
| Short  | +0       |
| Medium | –1       |
| Long   | –2       |

Missiles do not have a range *per se* and are therefore exempt from range penalties. This is because their internal guidance systems make constant adjustments trying to keep them on target. As long as they are fired from within fighting range, they have a chance of scoring a hit.

### OMs/DMs

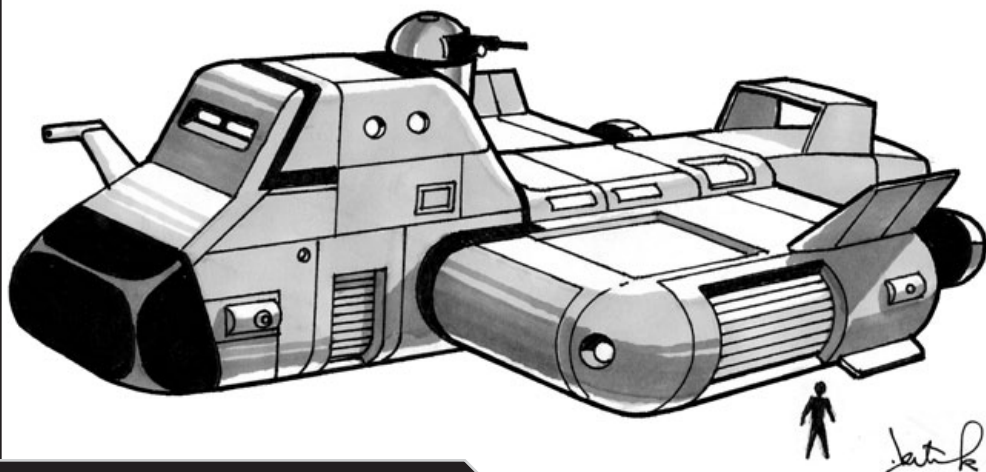
Offensive and Defensive Modifiers are as described in the Ship Stats section (p. 159). Remember that ships attacked by weapons capable of automatic fire have their DM halved with any remainder rounded down.

### PILOTING TEST

The pilots of both ships in a combat have an opportunity to use their Piloting skill to influence the outcome of the attacks to follow. An opposed Piloting test is conducted. The winner of the test has the number of successes he earned reduced by the number of successes from his opponent, if there were any. If any successes remain, they form a pool that the owner of the ship can draw upon to affect the outcome of the Gunnery tests to follow. Any number of points may be drawn from the pool and applied to tests but their use must be declared before the Gunnery test is rolled. Any successes remaining in the pool at the end of the current combat are lost. For example, the pilot of the attacking ship gets 4 successes from his Piloting test while the defender earns 6 successes. The defending pilot wins, subtracts the attacking pilot's successes from his own, yielding two successes which can be applied to Gunnery tests for this combat. Another opposed Piloting test is conducted when the attacker becomes the defender and vice versa later in the round.

### DAMAGE

A successful hit causes damage to a starship's hull. To determine the damage a weapon does, consult the weapon table to find its Damage Value (see *Starship Weapons*, p. 166). The amount of damage a weapon does is determined exactly like personal weapons: the degrees of success the gunner obtains on his attack roll is multiplied by the DV to determine the amount of damage inflicted on the enemy ship. Keep in mind that damage done by linked weapons is doubled.



A Negocisto-class Fast Freighter.

When a ship's Hull rating is reduced to 0, the ship is considered disabled and its superstructure will begin to lose integrity with sufficient additional damage. Most ships possess escape pods and other evacuation devices to safeguard the surviving crew in this event. Unless there are reasons to assume otherwise, the GM should allow characters to escape a disabled and about to be destroyed ship without much concern. After all, being cast adrift in space and possibly marooned on a nearby inhospitable planet is vastly more interesting than being reduced to space dust. Remember that all damage is applied at the end of the round, so technically a ship which has suffered fatal damage can still finish out that round of combat.

## CRITICAL HITS

When an attack roll scores a critical hit, instead of simple doing maximum damage, the GM may choose to use the following optional table:

**TABLE 9–2: Optional Critical Hit Results**

| 2D12  | Effect(s)  | 2D12  | Effect(s)                        |
|-------|--|-------|----------------------------------|
| 2–7   | Normal critical hit                                  | 16–17 | Damaged system: engines          |
| 8–9   | Normal critical hit, crew casualties                 | 18–19 | Damaged system: sensors          |
| 10    | Severe critical hit, artificial gravity/life support | 20–21 | Damaged system: offensive system |
| 11    | Severe critical hit, crew casualties                 | 22–23 | Damaged system: weapon           |
| 12–13 | Damaged system: comm system                          | 24    | Destroyed weapon                 |
| 14–15 | Damaged system: defense system                       |       |                                  |

**Note:** Any result listed as “damaged” means that component has stopped working until it is repaired.

## NORMAL CRITICAL HIT RESULTS

**Normal Critical Hit:** The weapon does maximum damage to the Hull Rating.

**Crew Casualties:** Crewmembers and passengers are severely injured or killed. Roll 1d12 to determine the percentage of the crew affected. If the ship carries passengers, also roll 1d12 to determine the percentage of passenger casualties. This result affects only NPCs, unless the GM states otherwise.

A starship with less than one-half of its normal crew complement takes a –2 penalty to the TN of all attacks.

A starship with less than one-quarter of its normal crew complement takes a –4 penalty to the TN of all attacks.

A starship with no crew continues to fly in its current direction at its current Move value. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no living crew or passengers, ignore this result and re-roll.

## SEVERE CRITICAL HIT RESULTS

**Gravity/Life Support:** The starship's artificial gravity and acceleration compensation is disabled for 1d12 rounds. During this time, the ship cannot turn or alter speed and anyone without ranks in the skill Acrobatics (Zero-G) suffers a –4 penalty on all tests while coping with the zero-gravity conditions. Those possessing the skill are unaffected. If this result is



rolled a second time and gravity has not been restored, the life support system also fails for 1d12 rounds. Anyone without access to some form of breathing gear must pass a Body test to remain conscious and be able to act during the current round; failure at the test results in suffocation.

**Crew Casualties:** As per the crew casualties result above except that a roll of 2d12 is used instead of 1d12. In addition, the crew is so shaken by this damage that the entire vessel is unable to act during the next Round.

## DAMAGED SYSTEM RESULTS

**Comm System:** The ship loses all communications capabilities until repaired. If this result is rolled again, ignore the result and re-roll.

**Defense System:** The ship's defensive capabilities are damaged, reducing DM by one. This result can be rolled multiple times, each time lowering the DM by -1. It is possible for the DM to drop below 0 because of this critical hit result.

**Engines:** The starship's Move decreases by 1 until the engines are repaired. If this result is rolled again, the effect is cumulative. If the ship's Move has already been reduced to 0 due to engine damage, ignore this result and re-roll.

**Sensors:** The starship is blinded until repaired. The Pilot and Gunners suffer a -4 If this result is rolled again, ignore the result and re-roll.

**Offensive System:** The ship's offensive capabilities are damaged, reducing OM by one. This result can be rolled multiple times, each time lowering the OM by -1. It is possible for the OM to drop below 0 because of this critical hit result.

**Weapon:** One of the starship's weapon mounts (attacker's choice) ceases to function. The weapon remains inoperable until it is repaired. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no functional weapons, ignore this result and re-roll.

## DESTROYED SYSTEM RESULT

**Weapon:** One of the starship's weapons (determined by the attacker) is destroyed. It cannot be repaired and must be replaced. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no weapons, ignore this result and re-roll. If the destroyed weapon was linked, the other weapon to which it was linked will continue to function normally but loses the benefit of the damage multiplier.

## REPAIRS

Each starship has a damage control rating. Each round, the ship's engineer may make a Technical Sciences test. If successful, he multiplies the degrees of success by the damage control rating to determine how many Hull points he may repair that round.

## REPAIRING CRITICAL HITS

A damaged system remains inoperable until it is repaired, which requires 10 hours of work and a successful Technical Sciences test. A starship's engineer (or engineering team) can perform jury-rig repairs on the system as an action during a round. The Technical Sciences test required to do this is performed at a TN-4 penalty. The repair lasts only until the end of the battle (or until the system is disabled again). During that round of jury-rigged repairs, the starship can continue to take other actions. If the engineer attempts to repair lost Hull points during the same round during which jury-rigged repairs were attempted, a cumulative TN -2 multiple action penalty is assessed for each jury-rig tried.

## STARSHIP WEAPONS

Though not exhaustive, the list below describes the weapons most commonly encountered aboard starships in the Thousand Suns.

### FUSION BEAM

The fusion beam initiates a fusion reaction and then directs the blast at the target.

### GAUSS GUN

The gauss gun is an electromagnetic accelerator that fires tiny ball bearings at an extremely high velocity.

### LASER

The simplest beam weapon, the laser is used generally for small craft. It consists of a focused beam of white-hot light.

### LASER, HEAVY

The heavy laser is simply an oversized laser that pours more energy on the target.

### MASER CANNON

Maser cannons channel an enormous amount of power through a linear antenna array, creating a broad-spectrum blast of energy that devastates the target with heat, light, and intense radiation.

### MASER CANNON, HEAVY

Heavy maser cannons are the most powerful shipboard weapon short of the deadly energy lances which are described below.

### MASS CANNON

The mass cannon uses gravitic technology to “charge” a small bit of matter with incredible gravitational energy, then hurls it at the target, where its increased gravitational pull causes it to slam into the target like a wrecking ball.

### MASS CANNON, HEAVY

The heavy mass cannon is a larger and more powerful version of the mass cannon.

### MISSILE, SUBMUNITION

This warhead consists of a bundle of dozens or even hundreds of tungsten steel darts, each mounted on small rocket motors. As the weapon approaches its target, the warhead splits open, unleashing a lethal hail of high-velocity metal arrows. The impact alone can vaporize several square meters of heavy armor.

### MISSILE, NUCLEAR

This 1-megaton warhead is essentially a fusion bomb rigged to a guided missile.

### MISSILE, PLASMA

The plasma warhead improves on the lower-tech chemical explosive. It creates a burst of white-hot plasma that can blast a small ship out of space with one shot.

NEEDLE DRIVER

The needle driver is a larger, heavier version of the rail cannon (see below), with an extremely high rate of fire. It fires small metal flechettes at the rate of thousands of rounds per minute.

PARTICLE BEAM

The particle beam projects a stream of protons, neutrons, or alpha particles at the target — each particle accelerated to near light-speed.

PARTICLE BEAM, HEAVY

This weapon is a larger version of the particle beam.

PLASMA CANNON

Using a powerful electrical charge to convert a mix of chemicals into white-hot plasma, this weapon then accelerates the plasma mass toward the target with a simple rail gun. The result is a bolt of incandescent plasma that can explosively vaporize objects in its path.

PLASMA CANNON, HEAVY

This weapon is simply a larger version of the plasma cannon.

RAIL CANNON

Rail cannons use a series of electromagnets to propel projectiles down a magnetic track. The projectiles are kinetic-energy weapons with no explosive charge, but at close ranges, they can still be quite devastating.

TABLE 9—3: Starship Weapons

| Type                 | Damage Value | Range | Rate of Fire | Cost    | Type                 | Damage Value | Range | Rate of Fire | Cost     |
|----------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|---------|----------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|----------|
| Fusion Beam          | 4 (60)       | 3     | S            | 90k\$   | Missile, Nuclear     | 5 (60)       | N/A   | S            | 2750k\$* |
| Gauss Gun            | 3 (50)       | 4     | S            | 150k\$  | Missile, Plasma      | 6 (90)       | N/A   | S            | 3500k\$* |
| Laser                | 2 (40)       | 3     | S            | 20k\$   | Needle Driver        | 2 (45)       | 4     | A            | 200k\$   |
| Laser, Heavy         | 4 (40)       | 4     | S            | 50k\$   | Particle Beam        | 4 (60)       | 4     | S            | 200k\$   |
| Maser Cannon         | 5 (75)       | 6     | S            | 650k\$  | Particle Beam, Heavy | 6 (75)       | 5     | S            | 500k\$   |
| Maser Cannon, Heavy  | 8 (100)      | 8     | S            | 2000k\$ | Plasma Cannon        | 5 (60)       | 3     | S            | 200k\$   |
| Mass Cannon          | 3 (50)       | 5     | S            | 275k\$  | Plasma Cannon, Heavy | 6 (75)       | 4     | S            | 250k\$   |
| Mass Cannon, Heavy   | 5 (75)       | 6     | S            | 650k\$  | Rail Cannon          | 3 (50)       | 3     | S            | 35k\$    |
| Missile, Submunition | 2 (40)       | N/A   | S            | 35k\$*  |                      |              |       |              |          |

**Damage Value:** The number in parentheses is the weapon's maximum damage.  
**Range:** Each doubling of the stated range defines the range category (short, medium, etc.)  
**Rate of Fire:** "S" indicates single shot capability, while "A" represents automatic capability.  
**Cost:** all costs are in thousands of sols  
\* cost for a lot of ten missiles

## SAMPLE STARSHIPS

Presented here are a small number of starships to use either as conveyances in traveling from world to world or as combatants in the starship combat system. More detailed treatments of starships, including rules for their construction, as well as many more types of vessels and components, can be found in the supplement *THOUSAND SUNS: STARSHIPS*.

### CARGOLINER

The cargoliner is most often found on heavily traveled routes in the Core, Civilized space or major emerging markets. It is optimized for freight service but includes room for six passengers.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 700 ■ **Move:** 5 ■ **Turn:** 45° ■ **Crew:** 21

**Cost:** 155.27 million\$

**Weapons:** 4 lasers in 4 single turrets

**Damage Control:** 3

**Cargo:** 390.9

### CARRIER, LIGHT

The light carrier is commonly deployed in a convoy escort role or in support of ground combat operations. It normally embarks 40 assault fighters.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 6 ■ **DM:** 2 ■ **Hull:** 5000 ■ **Move:** 6 ■ **Turn:** 90° ■ **Crew:** 1500

**Base Cost:** 1844.28 million\$

**Weapons:** 12 lasers in 12 single turrets; 6 fusion guns in 6 single turrets

**Damage Control:** 4

**Cargo:** 218.7

### CLIPPER

This small liner or personnel transport is intended for use, as opposed to heavy cargo. Clippers are frequently fitted with top-of-the-line engines for the best possible speed.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 300 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 45° ■ **Crew:** 9

**Cost:** 91.90 million\$

**Weapons:** Five lasers in 5 single turrets

**Cargo:** 122.8

**Damage Control:** 3

### CORVETTE

Essentially a larger version of the escort ship, the corvette serves as both a gunship and fleet escort. Of the military vessels designed to operate independently in wartime, corvettes are the smallest.

**Class:** Light

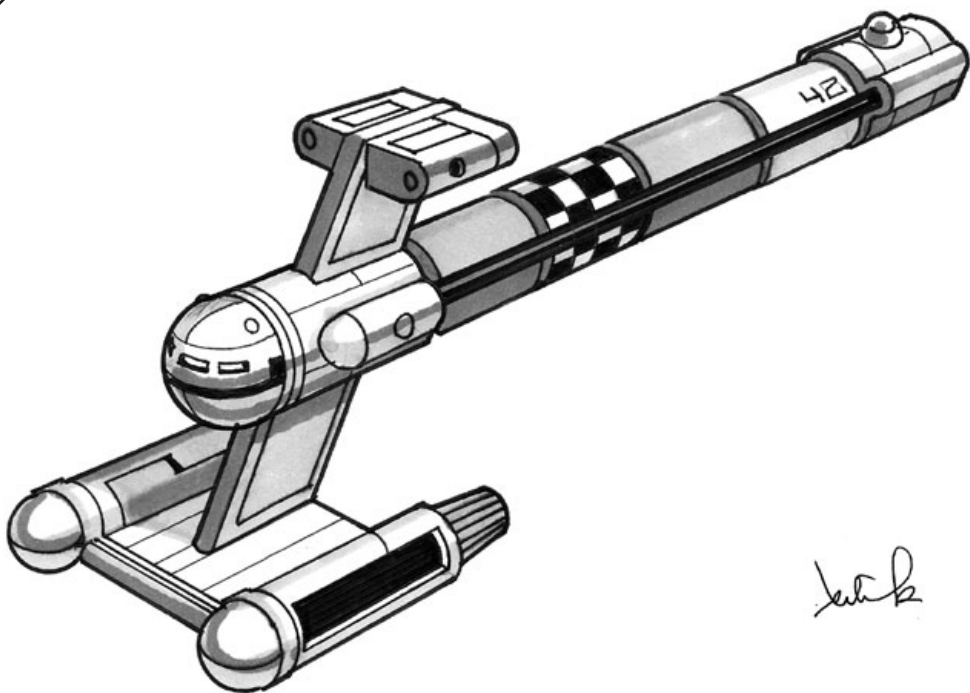
**OM:** 4 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 80 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 135° ■ **Crew:** 16

**Base Cost:** 43.37 million\$

**Weapons:** 4 linked fusion guns in 4 single turrets; 1 missile launcher, magazine capacity of 4, two linked pairs.

**Damage Control:** 3

**Cargo:** 4.0



A Granda-class Bulk Freighter.

## COURIER

A courier is capable of extended operation away from its base (frequently a larger ship). Many low-end star yachts fall into the courier category.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 15 ■ **Move:** 6 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 4

**Base Cost:** 10.07 million\$

**Weapons:** 1 laser in a single turret

**Damage Control:** 1

**Cargo:** 2.1

## CRUISER

The cruiser is a warship that serves several roles. It may be part of a task force, escorting capital ships or laying mines. It may operate independently as a scout and raider. Conversely, it may serve in diplomatic and scientific tasks. Light cruisers frequently have outstanding endurance and can operate with little or no resupply for months on end. A cruiser hull could serve equally well as an escort carrier or assault transport.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 6 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 400 ■ **Move:** 6 ■ **Turn:** 90° ■ **Crew:** 120

**Base Cost:** 216.1 million\$

**Weapons:** 7 fusion guns in single turrets; 2 missile launchers, magazine capacity of 6  
6 submunition missiles

**Damage Control:** 4

**Cargo:** 15.4

## CRUISER, STRIKE

These armored cruisers often serve as the centerpiece of raiding or patrolling task forces, especially if heavier warships are unavailable. Many strike cruisers are configured for task force command functions; the command cruiser is a common variant of this hull type. A strike cruiser hull could easily serve as a light carrier or assault carrier.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 8 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 500 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 90° ■ **Crew:** 150

**Base Cost:** 270.90 million\$

**Weapons:** 8 fusion guns in single turrets; 2 missile launchers, total magazine capacity of 6 plasma missiles

**Damage Control:** 4

**Cargo:** 22.2

## DESTROYER

Destroyers take their name from the torpedo-boat destroyers of the late 19th century. They are integral to the defense of a task force, screening it against small craft and attack ships. Destroyers are often armed with one or two bombs or missiles useful against much larger ships.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 4 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 150 ■ **Move:** 6 ■ **Turn:** 135° ■ **Crew:** 80

**Base Cost:** 77.76 million\$

**Weapons:** 6 linked fusion guns in 6 single turrets; 2 rail cannon in 2 single turrets; 2 missile launchers, magazine capacity of 6

**Damage Control:** 3

**Cargo:** 11.2

## ESCORT

Escorts are a long-range patrol craft employed for various duties, including the protection of merchant ships and remote bases. Gunships or missile boats could qualify as escorts.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 4 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 40 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 8

**Base Cost:** 21.19 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked rail cannon in single turrets; 2 missile launch cells, 2 submunition missiles, linked pair

**Damage Control:** 1

**Cargo:** 6.8

## FIGHTER

Designed for action against other small craft, fighters lack the punch to be effective against large targets unless they've been modified to carry warheads.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 8 ■ **DM:** 9 ■ **Hull:** 16 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 1

**Base Cost:** 15.71 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked fixed mount fusion guns

**Damage Control:** 1

**Cargo:** 0.8

## FIGHTER, ASSAULT

The assault fighter is similar to the fighter described — with superior engines and armaments.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 8 ■ **DM:** 9 ■ **Hull:** 20 ■ **Move:** 8 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 1

**Cost:** 16.41 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked particle beams in a dual turret

**Damage Control:** 2

**Cargo:** 0.9

## FREIGHTER, BULK

Bulk freighters usually carry cargo in bulk containers, and carry out regular runs between densely populated systems.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 250 ■ **Move:** 5 ■ **Turn:** 45° ■ **Crew:** 8

**Base Cost:** 60.6 million\$

**Weapons:** 4 linked heavy lasers in 4 single turrets

**Damage Control:** 4

**Cargo:** 158.1

## FREIGHTER, FAST

Fast freighters are small commercial starships generally employed in frequent runs, such as delivering small cargoes to distant outposts and bases, or occasional runs of valuable cargo, such as technical specifications or luxury goods. They are the starships of choice among independent traders in the Thousand Suns.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 32 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 4

**Base Cost:** 15.64 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked rail cannon in 2 single turrets; 2 linked heavy lasers in single turrets

**Damage Control:** 1

**Cargo:** 7.7

## FRIGATE

A military vessel used for scouting and escort duties, the frigate is primarily intended to act as a screen for larger vessels against attacks by small craft.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 4 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 120 ■ **Move:** 6 ■ **Turn:** 135° ■ **Crew:** 60

**Base Cost:** 55.63 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 needle drivers in single turrets; 2 fusion guns in single turrets; 1 missile launcher, magazine capacity of 4 nuclear missiles

**Damage Control:** 3

**Cargo:** 8.8



## HAULER

The hauler is a space-going tug that drags heavy, non-powered loads and modular cargo containers, though they have precious little cargo space of their own. Haulers are fitted with big power plants and huge engines, at the expense of crew quarters and armaments.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 72 ■ **Move:** 5 ■ **Turn:** 135° ■ **Crew:** 5

**Base Cost:** 19.06 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked heavy lasers in 1 dual turret

**Damage Control:** 2

**Cargo:** 5 on board; can haul 37 externally

## LAUNCH

A launch is a shuttle designed simply to move small amounts of people from one point to another. Launches are rarely armed or armored. Evacuation pods and lunar landers fit into this category.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 3 ■ **Hull:** 8 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 1

**Base Cost:** 6.19 million\$

**Weapons:** 1 fixed laser

**Damage Control:** 0

**Cargo:** 1.4

## RAIDER

The term raider came into use for ships of this size during the Warring States period when they were fielded by short lived pocket empires bent on conquest. This particular version includes an internal hangar bay capable of holding two escort sized vessels.

**Class:** Heavy

**OM:** 8 ■ **DM:** 4 ■ **Hull:** 1200 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 45° ■ **Crew:** 360

**Base Cost:** 664.96 million\$

**Weapons:** 12 linked particle beams in 6 dual turrets; 3 missile launchers, magazine capacity of 36

**Damage Control:** 4

**Cargo:** 53.1

## SCOUT

Scouts are designed to cross great distances and locate enemies quickly without engaging in serious combat.

**Class:** Ultralight

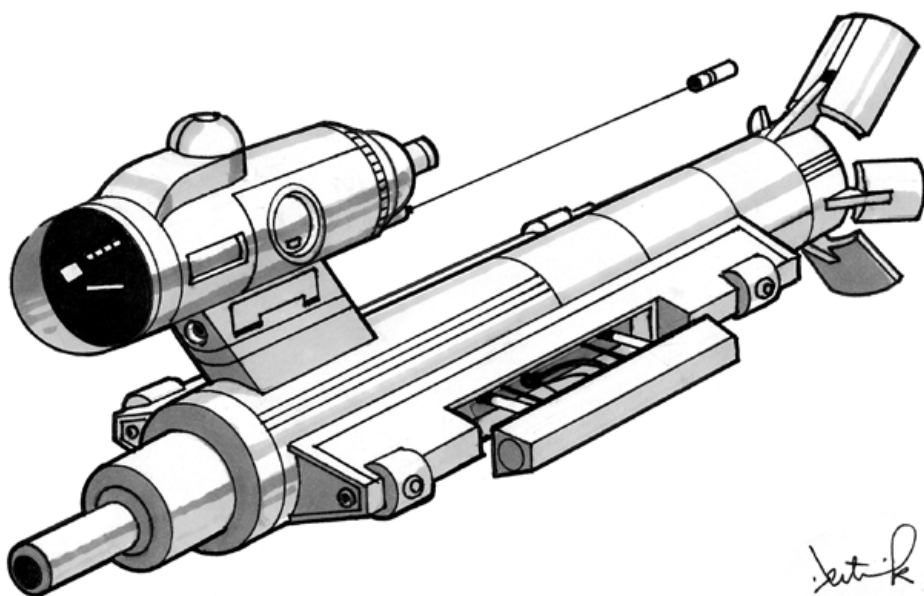
**OM:** 2 ■ **DM:** 1 ■ **Hull:** 30 ■ **Move:** 7 ■ **Turn:** 180° ■ **Crew:** 4

**Base Cost:** 21.45 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked fusion guns in 1 dual turret; 2 missile launch cells, 2 submunition missiles

**Damage Control:** 1

**Cargo:** 2.4



A Rapida Glavo-class Fighter.

## MODIFYING SHIPS

Using the information presented below, the “stock” ships presented in this chapter can be modified to a limited degree. There just isn’t enough space to give the subject complete treatment here. Those GMs and players interested in the full starship design and modification process are referred to *THOUSAND SUNS: STARSHIPS*.

To make the modification process easier, components are treated as individual modules which can be swapped in and out. Modules which require power include a “slice” of power plant. This slice is not actually part of the module, it just represents a portion of the ship’s overall generation capability which is devoted to the module and is meant to simplify the process.

All modules have two values associated with them, one is its volume in displacement tons and the other is its cost in millions of sols. When a module is removed, the unused portion of the ship’s total volume is credited with that amount. The reverse is done when a module is added. A ship has the same number of displacement tons as it does Hull Points. The entry for cargo space in a ship description can represent not only actual cargo space but also any unused portion of the ship. Thus, if one module is removed and another, larger one is added, some of the needed room can be deducted from the cargo space, if any remains. (If not, then another module needs to be removed to create sufficient space). This is admittedly a simplified approach favoring speed and ease of use over realism.

The cost shown on the table is for a new version of the module. The amount is used as the base value when attempting to sell or purchase a used module. Selling off an old module can help offset the cost of the newer one but depreciation is a factor in any calculation. It’s highly unlikely that even a relatively new system can be sold for its original cost. A figure of 80% for something even a year old is considered pretty good. Items that have been in service for decades may only garner a quarter of their original value, if even that. Negotiating to buy or sell a module is really an exercise in social combat.

## MODULES

There are four types of modules available; beam/projectile weapon, missile related, tactical computer and armor.

Beam and projectile weapon modules have a column for mount which indicates how the weapon is attached to the ship. Entries like single or double indicate turrets with that many weapons installed.

A missile launcher can hold one missile internally, to fire more than that requires that a missile magazine be attached. For ease of calculation, each missile displaces 0.25 tons. Each missile launch cell holds one missile. Once that missile has been fired, the launch cell must be externally reloaded.

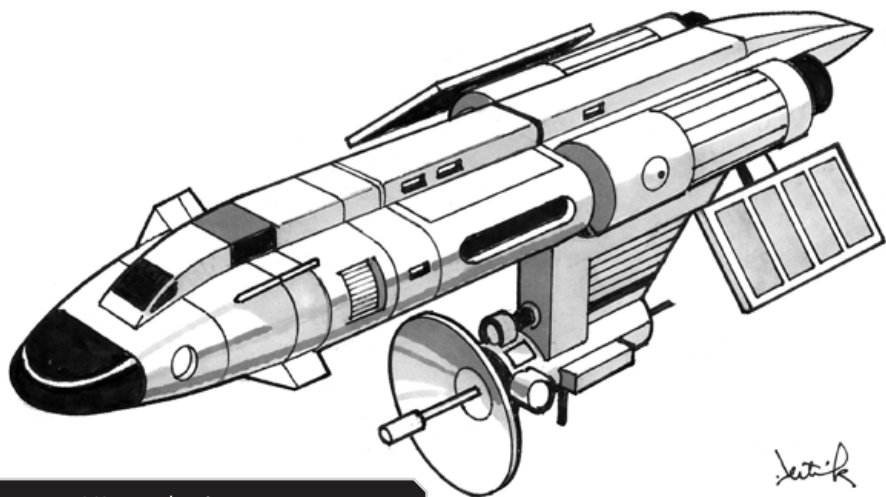
In order for two weapons to be linked, a link computer must be purchased. One link is required for each pair of weapons, whether they be beam, projectile or missile. Link computers cannot be shared, every linked pair of weapons must have a dedicated link computer.

Tactical computers enhance a ship's OM or DM. Each one is dedicated to either offense or defense and confers a TN+2 bonus to OM or DM respectively. A maximum of two offensive and two defensive tactical computers can be added to any one ship; the bonuses are cumulative.

Armor is not actually a module per se but is considered to have been added when the ship was constructed. When a PC or PCs acquire the ship, they have the option to add armor to the vessel retroactively. This can only be done when the ship is first acquired, because there's no adequate way to effectively bolt it on later. The full cost of the armor must either be paid for at the time the ship is purchased or included in its mortgage, situation permitting.

Armor adds an armor value (AV) to the ship which works the same as armor in personal combat. Any damage done is first reduced by the AV before being applied to the Hull value or when using the detailed damage rules.

Example: A fast freighter is acquired by a group of PCs straight out of character generation. They decide to retroactively add an AV of 5 to the ship. Thus 5 points of AV x the freighter's Hull of 32 x 0.005 = 0.8 tons. Each ton of armor costs one million sols and so the total cost is 1.0M\$ x 0.8 = 0.8M\$. The freighter's 7.7 tons of cargo is reduced by 0.8 tons for a new total of 6.9 tons. The cost of the ship rises from 15.64M\$ to 16.44M\$.



A Vaganto-class Scout.

TABLE 9–4: Ship Modules

| Weapon              | Mount  | Tons | Cost | Weapon               | Mount  | Tons | Cost | Weapon             | Mount  | Tons | Cost |
|---------------------|--------|------|------|----------------------|--------|------|------|--------------------|--------|------|------|
| Fusion Beam         | Fixed  | 1.3  | 1.01 | Particle Beam        | Fixed  | 1.0  | 0.31 | Mass Cannon        | Fixed  | 1.0  | 0.39 |
|                     | Single | 1.5  | 1.22 |                      | Single | 1.1  | 0.45 |                    | Single | 1.1  | 0.52 |
|                     | Double | 1.6  | 1.38 |                      | Double | 1.2  | 0.55 |                    | Double | 1.2  | 0.62 |
|                     | Triple | 1.8  | 1.54 |                      | Triple | 1.3  | 0.65 |                    | Triple | 1.3  | 0.72 |
|                     | Quad   | 2.0  | 1.70 |                      | Quad   | 1.4  | 0.75 |                    | Quad   | 1.4  | 0.82 |
| Laser               | Fixed  | 0.7  | 0.06 | Particle Beam, Heavy | Fixed  | 1.4  | 0.65 | Mass Cannon, Heavy | Fixed  | 1.4  | 0.80 |
|                     | Single | 0.8  | 0.19 |                      | Single | 1.6  | 0.86 |                    | Single | 1.6  | 1.01 |
|                     | Double | 0.9  | 0.29 |                      | Double | 1.8  | 1.02 |                    | Double | 1.8  | 1.17 |
|                     | Triple | 1.0  | 0.39 |                      | Triple | 2.0  | 1.18 |                    | Triple | 2.0  | 1.33 |
|                     | Quad   | 1.1  | 0.49 |                      | Quad   | 2.1  | 1.34 |                    | Quad   | 2.1  | 1.49 |
| Laser, Heavy        | Fixed  | 1.1  | 0.13 | Plasma Cannon        | Fixed  | 1.6  | 0.35 | Needle Driver      | Fixed  | 1.3  | 0.31 |
|                     | Single | 1.3  | 0.33 |                      | Single | 1.9  | 0.61 |                    | Single | 1.5  | 0.52 |
|                     | Double | 1.5  | 0.49 |                      | Double | 2.1  | 0.81 |                    | Double | 1.6  | 0.68 |
|                     | Triple | 1.7  | 0.65 |                      | Triple | 2.3  | 1.01 |                    | Triple | 1.8  | 0.84 |
|                     | Quad   | 1.8  | 0.81 |                      | Quad   | 2.5  | 1.21 |                    | Quad   | 2.0  | 1.00 |
| Maser Cannon        | Fixed  | 1.6  | 0.80 | Plasma Cannon, Heavy | Fixed  | 2.3  | 0.44 | Rail Cannon        | Fixed  | 0.8  | 0.43 |
|                     | Single | 1.9  | 1.06 |                      | Single | 2.7  | 0.82 |                    | Single | 1.0  | 0.56 |
|                     | Double | 2.1  | 1.26 |                      | Double | 3.0  | 1.12 |                    | Double | 1.1  | 0.66 |
|                     | Triple | 2.3  | 1.46 |                      | Triple | 3.3  | 1.42 |                    | Triple | 1.2  | 0.76 |
|                     | Quad   | 2.5  | 1.66 |                      | Quad   | 3.6  | 1.72 |                    | Quad   | 1.3  | 0.86 |
| Maser Cannon, Heavy | Fixed  | 2.8  | 2.19 | Gauss Gun            | Fixed  | 1.1  | 0.30 |                    |        |      |      |
|                     | Single | 3.3  | 2.70 |                      | Single | 1.3  | 0.43 |                    |        |      |      |
|                     | Double | 3.7  | 3.10 |                      | Double | 1.4  | 0.53 |                    |        |      |      |
|                     | Triple | 4.1  | 3.50 |                      | Triple | 1.5  | 0.63 |                    |        |      |      |
|                     | Quad   | 4.5  | 3.90 |                      | Quad   | 1.6  | 0.73 |                    |        |      |      |

TABLE 9–4: Ship Modules

|                                |      |       |                                       |       |             |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Missile launcher               | 1.2  | 0.14  | Weapon link                           | N/A   | 0.20        |
| Missile magazine (per missile) | 0.25 | N/A   | Hull armor (per point of AV per Hull) | 0.005 | 1.0 per ton |
| Missile launch cell            | 0.50 | 0.001 | Tactical computer                     | 0.3   | 0.75        |

# VEHICLES

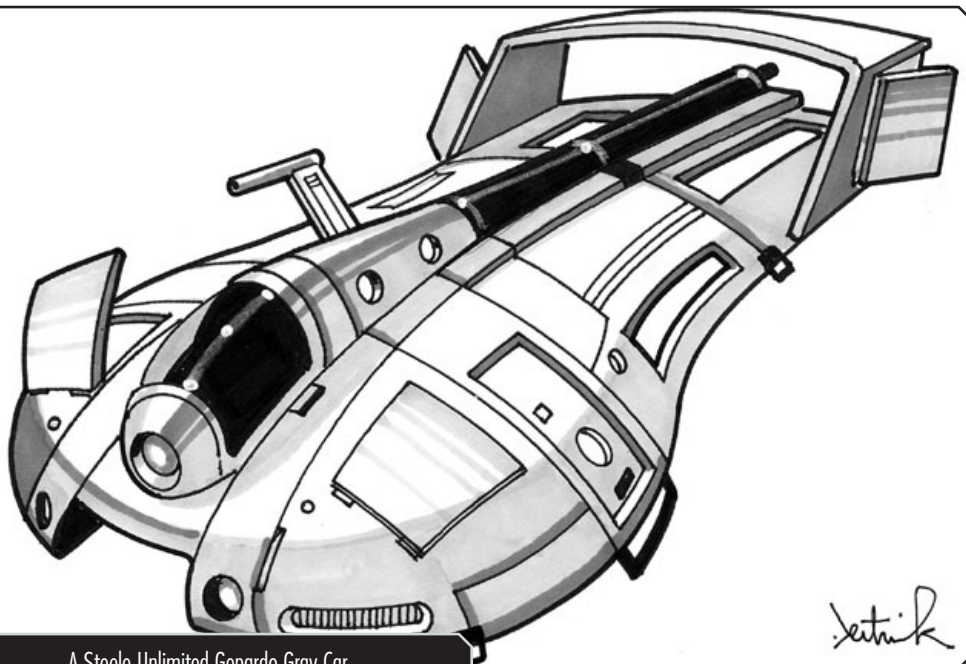
While starships are the means by which adventurers journey from world to world, on a world itself other means of transportation are necessary. Each type of vehicle has its own specialization of Piloting. Piloting a vehicle under normal circumstances should rarely require a skill test. In the case of extraordinary circumstances, a skill test, possibly with modifiers ranging from -1 to -6, is more reasonable. The result of a failed Piloting test varies with context, but may result in a collision (see below) at the discretion of the Game Master.

## CHASES

At its most basic, a chase is a matter of comparing the speeds of the vehicles involved in the chase, with faster vehicles having the advantage. Of course, terrain and driver skill also enters into the equation as well. This can be simulated by the drivers of each vehicle making extended opposed Piloting tests (see *Extended Tests*, p. 76), with victory achieved when a certain number of successes is achieved by either the pursuer or the pursued, at the discretion of the GM. Additional complexity can easily be added to this system, if so desired.

## COLLISIONS

In the case of a collision with another object, a vehicle — and its occupants — takes 1D12 points of damage for every 10 km per hour of its speed at the time of the collision. This damage is mitigated by the armor value of the vehicle and the armor value of any protection worn by occupants. A vehicle struck from behind only take 1D12 points of damage per 20 km per hour of its speed.



A Steele Unlimited Gepardo Grav Car.

## VEHICLES IN COMBAT

For the purposes of combat, vehicles are treated just like characters, except that, instead of Vitality points, they have Durability. Like Vitality, a vehicle suffers a penalty for every fifth of its total Durability it takes in damage. This penalty is a -1 TN to all tests made with the vehicle, such as Piloting. In addition, the vehicle's top speed is reduced by one-fifth as well. Also, remember that firing from a moving vehicle incurs a -2 TN to all Shoot tests. Occupants of a vehicle may have some form of cover, depending on how enclosed they are while riding in it.

## SAMPLE VEHICLES

Vehicles possess the following statistics:

**Crew:** Number of persons needed to pilot the vehicle.

**Passengers:** Number of additional persons able to fit safely within the vehicle.

**Initiative:** The bonus or penalty to the pilot's Initiative Rating while piloting the vehicle.

**Handling:** The bonus or penalty to the pilot's Piloting skill while piloting the vehicle.

**Speed:** The vehicle's top speed.

**Armor Value:** The vehicle's AV.

**Durability:** The vehicular equivalent of Vitality.

**Cost:** The cost of the vehicle in sols.

**Restriction:** The availability of the vehicle in the Thousand Suns.

## GRAV VEHICLES

Grav Vehicles are extremely popular throughout the Thousand Suns. Air traffic control on most worlds restricts grav traffic to 1500 meters or less. Police and well-marked airspace "lanes" keep traffic in line. Unless otherwise noted, civilian grav vehicles provide partial cover for their occupants. The operative skill for grav vehicles is Vehicle Operation.

### GRAV BIKE

The grav bike can travel as high as 4500 meters, and that limit is set due to the rider's inability to breathe at higher altitudes without an oxygen mask. The hoverbike provides its rider with no cover.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 1 ■ **Initiative:** +1 ■ **Handling:** +2 ■ **Speed:** 675 kph  
**Armor Value:** 25 ■ **Durability:** 45 ■ **Cost:** 200,000\$

### GRAV BUS

The Grav bus provides the flying version of mass transit.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 38 ■ **Initiative:** -4 ■ **Handling:** -4 ■ **Speed:** 250 kph  
**Armor Value:** 40 ■ **Durability:** 135 ■ **Cost:** 1.5 million \$

### GRAV CAR

The grav car is capable of flying up to 9000 meters when the cabin is sealed.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 4 ■ **Initiative:** -1 ■ **Handling:** +0 ■ **Speed:** 400 kph  
**Armor Value:** 30 ■ **Durability:** 90 ■ **Cost:** 275,000\$

## GRAV TRUCK

The hovertruck is frequently used by emergency services personnel (with modifications) for rescuing stranded hoverists or reaching hikers and mountain climbers lost at high altitudes.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 1 ■ **Initiative:** -3 ■ **Handling:** -4 ■ **Speed:** 300 kph  
**Armor Value:** 35 ■ **Durability:** 96 ■ **Cost:** 1 million \$

## GROUND VEHICLES

Ground cars, on worlds where they are still used, are required by law to carry remote shutdown systems in the event the vehicle is involved in a high-speed chase. Cars can be equipped with options like heated side mirrors, power seats, and sunroofs for additional cost. Unless otherwise noted, ground cars provide partial cover for their occupants. The operative skill for cars is Vehicle Operation.

### AERO

The Aero four-door economy sedan offers comfort and performance for a reasonable price. Slower than most civilian ground cars, the Aero offers all the usual luxuries included in the base price — keeping the cost down by selling budget components, rather than the high-end electronics usually installed.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 4 ■ **Initiative:** -1 ■ **Handling:** -1 ■ **Speed:** 150 kph  
**Armor Value:** 30 ■ **Durability:** 105 ■ **Cost:** 28,000\$

### LUKSO

The Lukso is widely recognized as the finest four-door luxury sedan in production.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 4 ■ **Initiative:** -1 ■ **Handling:** +1 ■ **Speed:** 200 kph  
**Armor Value:** 30 ■ **Durability:** 105 ■ **Cost:** 200,000\$

### METROPOLA

The Metropola is the ultimate in chauffeured luxury. Powered by a particle reactor, it is loaded with every available luxury feature. A partition divides the driver's seat from the rest of the vehicle. The solid construction lends the Metropola a slightly higher durability than other civilian vehicles, and armored versions with even higher Durability are available at higher prices.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 7 ■ **Initiative:** -2 ■ **Handling:** -2 ■ **Speed:** 200 kph  
**Armor Value:** 35 ■ **Durability:** 120 ■ **Cost:** 1 million \$

### SALIKO

This mid-size, two-door sedan is a common ground car model. It has improved air filters to keep out the kind of dust found in the environments of some planets. They are less popular on the Core worlds, except when they are adapted to desert driving.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 4 ■ **Initiative:** -2 ■ **Handling:** -2 ■ **Speed:** 200 kph  
**Armor Value:** 30 ■ **Durability:** 105 ■ **Cost:** 20,000\$

### SPIRITO

The Spirito is a comfortable, four-door, midsize sedan with a powerful minireactor engine.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 4 ■ **Initiative:** -2 ■ **Handling:** +0 ■ **Speed:** 250 kph  
**Armor Value:** 30 ■ **Durability:** 105 ■ **Cost:** 27,500\$





At the helm.

## TAKSIO

The Taksio is a computer-driven taxi equipped with a driver autocomp. It features two facing bench seats with room for six passengers, and a small view screen and speaker that hang down from the ceiling. The friendly voice of its automated driver requests destination information as well as displaying the question on the view screen. The computer calculates the fare and pre-charges the passenger. In case of emergency, a manual stop button mounted in the middle of the speaker allows passengers to safely halt the vehicle. Although there are no manual controls, the computer is equipped with an access jack behind the front seat. A computer with the appropriate interface program can be plugged into this jack to override the computer and allow an occupant to manually control the vehicle with a successful Computers test.

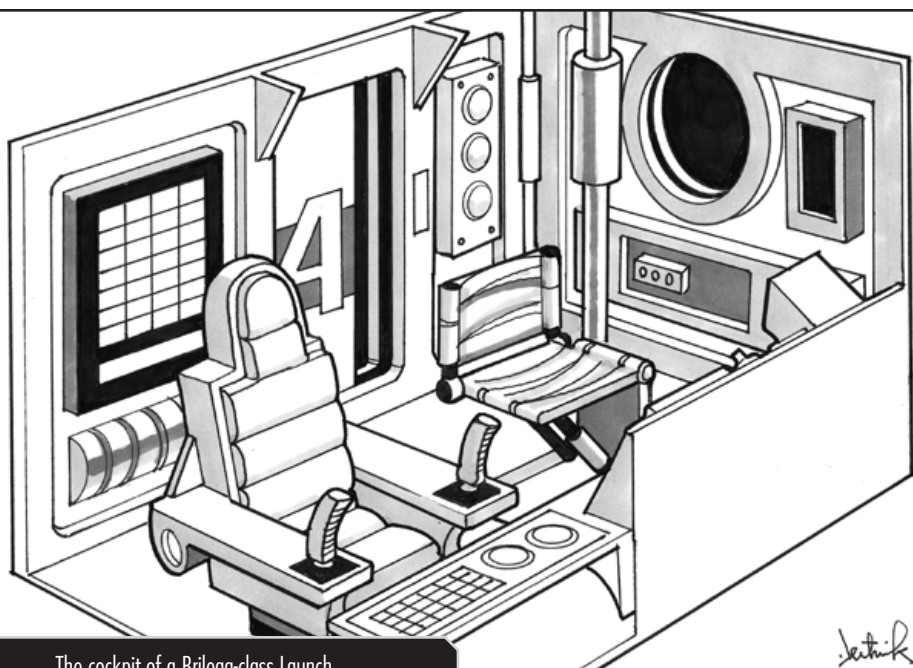
**Crew:** 0 ■ **Passengers:** 6 ■ **Initiative:** -3 ■ **Handling:** -2 ■ **Speed:** 200 kph  
**Armor Value:** 25 ■ **Durability:** 105 ■ **Cost:** 50,000\$

## MILITARY VEHICLES

Despite being grouped together under the military vehicle heading, some of these vehicles are used by law-enforcement and emergency services. The operative skill for these vehicles is Vehicle Operation.

### ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER

The standard APC is fusion-powered and fully enclosed. The crew consists of a driver and two gunners. The vehicle has three topside hatches, located directly above each crew



The cockpit of a Brilega-class Launch.

position, with a large door/ramp in the back for infantry troops to board or disembark. Entering or disembarking through a top hatch requires an action. The APC provides full cover to all its occupants.

The vehicle has a pair of mounted twin .50 caliber machine guns mounted near two of the three topside hatches.

**Crew:** 3 ■ **Passengers:** 8 ■ **Initiative:** -1 ■ **Handling:** -1 ■ **Speed:** 250 kph  
**Armor Value:** 60 ■ **Durability:** 165 ■ **Cost:** 1.5 million\$

## GRAV TANK

The grav tank is powered by a particle reactor and crewed by a pilot, gunner, gun loader, and commander. It comes equipped with a fully turreted mass cannon as its main gun and a chaingun in a separate turret located above the commander's hatch. Each crew position has a topside hatch located directly above it. Entering or disembarking through a top hatch requires an action, and starting the grav tank requires another action. The grav tank provides full cover to all its occupants.

**Crew:** 4 ■ **Passengers:** 0 ■ **Initiative:** -3 ■ **Handling:** -2 ■ **Speed:** 250 kph  
**Armor Value:** 100 ■ **Durability:** 195 ■ **Cost:** 12 million \$

Statistics for the grav tank's mass cannon and chaingun are presented here:

| Type        | Damage Value | Range | Rate of Fire | Cost     |
|-------------|--------------|-------|--------------|----------|
| Chaingun    | 7 (90)       | 20 m  | S, A         | 3000\$   |
| Mass Cannon | 9 (120)      | 30 m  | S            | 20,000\$ |

## AIR VEHICLES

### GYROCOPTER

This one-seat helicopter is used primarily by the military, but many exist in the law enforcement roles and in the corporate sector. The mostly enclosed cockpit gives its pilot partial cover.

**Crew:** 1 ■ **Passengers:** 0 ■ **Initiative:** -1 ■ **Handling:** -1 ■ **Speed:** 300 kph

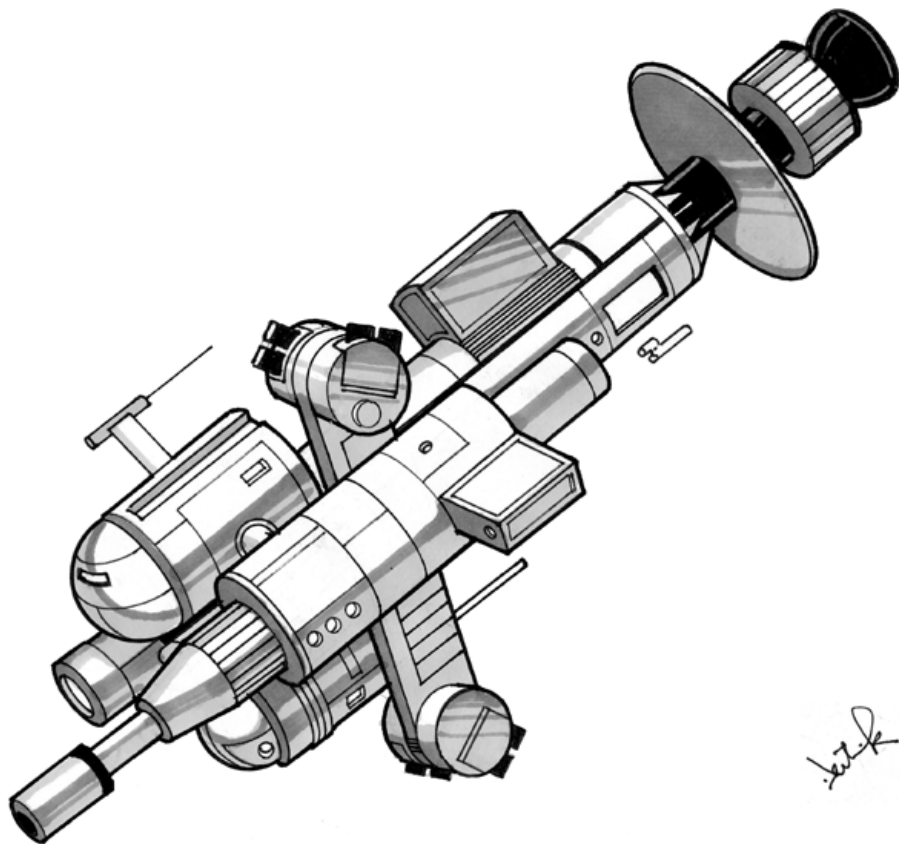
**Armor Value:** 25 ■ **Durability:** 80 ■ **Cost:** 350,000\$

### TURTO

One of the last military helicopters in use before they were replaced with grav vehicles, the Turto remains a familiar sight over the battlefields of lower-tech worlds.

**Crew:** 3 ■ **Passengers:** 12 ■ **Initiative:** -3 ■ **Handling:** -2 ■ **Speed:** 300 kph

**Armor Value:** 60 ■ **Durability:** 135 ■ **Cost:** 6.5 million \$



A Nesubigbla-class Destroyer.



Helena-Xantippe Molitor, Governor-General of Centro Sector.

# CHAPTER 10: GAME MASTERING

"A world is supported by four things ... the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the righteous and the valor of the brave. But all of these are as nothing ... without a ruler who knows the art of ruling."

— Frank Herbert, *Dune* (1965)

# CHAPTER 10: GAME MASTERING

While it is the players who create the characters that explore the many worlds of the *Thousand Suns*, it is the Game Master who creates and populates those worlds, providing the situations that are the building blocks of exciting Imperial SF adventures. This chapter is intended to aid the GM in this most important of tasks by offering both a brief overview of his role in *THOUSAND SUNS* and some of the elements of the literary genre on which this game is based.

## THE GAME MASTER'S ROLE

Being a good Game Master is more art than science. It is a role with which one becomes comfortable with time and experience. Consequently, no advice in this chapter can substitute for the simple act of creating and running adventures and campaigns. Nevertheless, there are a few basic guidelines that are helpful to novices as they attempt to become more comfortable with this unique role in *THOUSAND SUNS*.

### REFEREE AND LAWGIVER

Above all else, a GM strives to be fair. The rules are intended as impartial guidelines in adjudicating many common activities and events in the game and they should be used as such. They are not exhaustive, however, which means that many times, a GM needs to rely upon his own judgment to determine the outcome of something in the game. So long as the GM remembers that his role is to act as an unbiased arbiter, favoring neither the players nor the NPCs, he should always feel confident about making a decision not covered by the rules and applying it.

### THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE

What makes a roleplaying game such an enjoyable pastime is that there is no script and no predetermined story. What happens in a session is the result of the unpredictable confluence of GM preparation, player choice, and random dice rolls. Good players are those who nimbly react to such unpredictability by thinking "outside the box." A good GM should reward and encourage such behavior by giving such the characters of such players a fair chance to succeed, even if it's a small one.

### MASTER OF THE GAME

*THOUSAND SUNS* belongs to every Game Master who runs a campaign using this book. They should feel free to bend it and twist it as they see fit. No rule within these pages is sacred; a GM can and should change anything he feels does not suit the kind of adventures or campaigns they wish to run.

### KEEP IT FUN

Never forget that this is a game and it's intended to be fun for all involved. That doesn't mean that everything must go the way the players wish it to go. Indeed, failure, disappointment,



and hard-won success are often far more enjoyable than easy victories. Still, a good GM knows his players and what they find enjoyable and tailors his adventures and campaigns accordingly. Impartiality does not require that a GM ignore the preferences and desires of the other players of the game. After all, a campaign's success depends equally on the ability of the Game Master and the players to find enjoyment in immersing themselves in an Imperial science fiction universe.

## CREATING IMPERIAL SF ADVENTURES

The literary genre we have termed “Imperial SF” features mighty galactic empires and plots whose primary inspiration derives from events during the Age of Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup>, when (primarily) European powers laid claim to vast swaths of the globe for a variety of political, economic, and military purposes. At the same time, Imperial SF isn't limited by its historical inspiration and the fact that most of its greatest writers wrote in the decades immediately following World War II is important to bear in mind as well. These writers were often ardent humanists who nevertheless understood the human condition all too well — its glorious heights and its ignominious depths. Imperial SF reflects this and adventures inspired by it should grapple with the central themes of the genre.

### OPTIMISTIC BUT REALISTIC

Imperial SF might seem a naively optimistic genre, with its predictions of regular interstellar travel and vast empires populated with members of many intelligent species. This isn't far from the truth. Many of the genre's writers did believe that science and technology could pave the way to amazing opportunities and untold knowledge for humanity. Imperial SF is thus not a “dark” genre; its predictions of the future are positive ones, filled with the expectation that tomorrow will be not just another day but a better day.

At the same time, Imperial SF writers generally didn't believe that science or technology would make human beings any better than their ancestors. Future men would fall victim to the same vices and sins as have all men. The only difference technology makes is that it gives human beings a broader canvas on which to exhibit their viciousness. Where tyrants in the past had to content themselves with killing thousands or millions of people, future despots might exterminate entire worlds or species. The figures of Hitler and Stalin cast long shadows over Imperial SF, as do the moral lapses committed in battling them. The same should be true in *THOUSAND SUNS*, where virtue and vice are never a function of one's Tech Level and no one, from the most primitive sapient in Wildspace to the most sophisticated Terran from the Core worlds, enjoys a privileged moral position.

### EXAMPLES

- Standing between the characters and their goal is a brutal but effective leader whose successes have made him a hero in the eyes of many.
- A brilliant scientist seeks to atone for past misdeeds with the help of the characters.
- The characters visit a war-torn world where outsiders seek to impose peace whatever the cost.

### POWER CORRUPTS BUT NOT ABSOLUTELY

A natural consequence of this perspective is that Imperial SF is — somewhat ironically given its emphasis on mighty empires and powerful star fleets — skeptical of unlimited power. Writers of the genre typically assumed that future humanity would be governed by



a benevolent but autocratic empire, a free but corrupt federation, or something in between. Once again, the twin historical precedents or both the Age of Imperialism and World War II are important to consider here. Whether one looks at Victorian Britain's bearing of "the white man's burden" or America's dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan, it's hard not to become somewhat cynical and this is reflected in the genre.

Nevertheless, it's also true that Imperial SF writers weren't wild-eyed utopians. They understood and expected that even the most benevolent and well-intentioned societies are neither above naked self-interest nor immune to the temptations of power. While far from excusing such immorality, Imperial SF writers didn't view them as uniquely worthy of opprobrium. All societies fall prey to pride and act accordingly; it is only those societies that make consistent positive contributions to civilization whose transgressions we single out as somehow unlike any others in history. Consequently, Imperial SF writers rarely preached from on high, preferring instead to take a longer view that acknowledges that societal corruption is not often so great that it blots out genuine goodness, however haphazardly accomplished.

## EXAMPLES

- The military governor of a planet uses his troops to bring much needed medicines and other supplies to the natives his government has conquered.
- A megacorporation improves the local standard of living on a frontier world in order to make its populace better suited for the ruthless extraction of its resources.
- The characters are hired to eliminate a local leader whose policies are at odds with those of their own government and impeding its expansion into a benighted area of Wildspace.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END (OR THE END OF THE BEGINNING)

Imperial SF writers were profoundly influenced by a number of historians, such as Edward Gibbon, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold J. Toynbee. Although their approaches and conclusions were quite different, each of them studied the causes of the rise and fall of great civilizations. Following the wreck of World War I, which cemented the unraveling of the Victorian world, it became fashionable among many intellectuals to see Western civilization as headed toward an inescapable decline, a view made all the more plausible by the rise of fascism and Communism and the seeming collapse of capitalism in the Great Depression.

Many Imperial SF writers lived through these turbulent times and thus found it easy to buy into the theories of historians who predicted inevitable doom and the rise of a new Dark Age. Unsurprisingly, many Imperial SF stories are filled with analogs of the Roman Empire in its final days, decadent and teetering on the brink of collapse with neo-barbarians at the gates. Of course, this theme is mitigated by several factors, including the rejection of historical necessity and the championing of free will. While it may be that all civilizations inevitably collapse, the time and circumstances of any collapse is not pre-ordained and the actions of one person — or a group of persons — can stand athwart history and yell "Stop!" Likewise, just as the end of the Roman Empire ushered in the Middle Ages, so too might the end of one galactic era spell not the end of civilization itself but simply of a particular civilization, which will be subsumed and surpassed by its descendant. Thus, imperial SF remains as skeptical of historical inevitability as it does of absolute power.

## EXAMPLES

- The characters journey to a world in the Marches, abandoned by the State, and are forced to turn to outsiders (Terran or alien) to protect them against other enemies.

- High-tech goods are becoming more scarce on a frontier world, as rising local violence make it more dangerous for even megacorporations to visit the planet.
- A planetary leader seizes assets of the interstellar State, hoping they will secure the future of his world.

## SPACE IS BIG, TRAVEL SLOW

Imperial SF takes as its canvas the vastness of the Milky Way galaxy. Writers in the genre assumed that mankind would expand throughout the entire universe through the miracle of FTL travel, just as Europeans explored every continent of Earth and the United States expanded westward. Like those historical forebears, though, travel in the galaxy is slow and communication between the far-flung outposts of Terran civilization even slower (thanks to the lack of FTL communications).

In practical terms, this means that each world is, at minimum, a week's travel from the next world, probably much farther. Each world must be more self-sufficient — or isolated — than would be all but the most remote and primitive of areas on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Earth. Characters must naturally be self-reliant. They are thrown on their own resources, because a call for help will take no fewer than two weeks for a response. The cavalry is not just over the next hill, waiting to save you. Consequently, a lot of Imperial SF characters are rugged individualists, perhaps with a libertarian streak to their personal philosophies. Many adventures in *THOUSAND SUNS* are spun from the fact that the characters are the only people of action in a star system.

### EXAMPLES

- While traveling aboard a large vessel in D-space, a predatory alien creature gets loose and begins to stalk the crew.
- A virulent disease thought long extinct has reappeared on a world the characters are visiting and it will take weeks before a cure can be delivered by starship.
- A world in the throws of a civil war awaits the arrival of peacekeeping troops to quell the violence.

## AUTHORITY IS DISTANT

Even the most tyrannical galactic empire cannot change the laws of physics. If space is big and travel slow, there are limits to the amount of control the central government can exercise with any reliability. Short of building a veritable police state, with star fleets in every system and soldiers garrisoned on every world, a light touch carries the day when it comes to interstellar governance. Most worlds, so long as they pay their taxes and do nothing to buck the central authority, are given a fair degree of independence.

This has several consequences. Firstly, galactic empires or federations are not monolithic. There may be a common “high culture” that unites the ruling elites, regardless of their homeworlds, but most planets have their own unique societies and cultures. This is good, because adventures should always have a dash of local color that separates events on the surface of Beta Leonis II from those on Persephone. Secondly, the central government must rule through representatives rather than directly. These representatives must often act on their own judgment rather than according to strict marching orders from the capital. Thus, they may be “good” or “evil” and their actions necessarily say very little about the central government itself. This frees the GM to make the local sector Governor-General either a “government man” or an aberration, depending on how he wishes to portray the

central authority. In any event, Imperial SF rarely describes a future in which jackbooted thugs can easily keep the whole of the galaxy under their thumbs and that provides lots of scope for adventure, whether the characters are beleaguered officers of the fleet or rebels seeking independence for their homeworld.

## EXAMPLES

- A starship commander must decide for himself whether to respond to an alien attack with a counter-attack or with diplomacy.
- A planetary governor chooses to look the other way when confronted with a local custom in violation of interstellar laws.
- The characters flee to another sector in order to escape legal entanglements elsewhere.

## RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

As in the real world, Imperial SF writers have wildly divergent ideas about the future role of religion and mysticism. Many writers assumed that, as science laid bare the inner workings of the universe, religion would inevitably fade away, revealed as nothing more than ignorance. Other writers assumed that religion satisfies a quintessentially human yearning that no amount of scientific knowledge can dampen. In settings created by writers of the first sort, religion either plays no significant role in interstellar affairs or is portrayed in a decidedly negative, if not villainous light. In settings created by writers of the second sort, religion is more varied in its portrayal and plays many different roles among the stars.

Neither approach is superior to the other and both are deeply rooted within the Imperial SF tradition. Consequently, Game Masters should feel free to adopt whichever approach they think best suits the kind of campaign they wish to run.

## EXAMPLES

- A planetary leader plays the part of a messiah in order to secure his grip on power.
- An ancient religious order labors among a poor and downtrodden alien species, earning their trust and learning much about them in the process.
- All who come into contact with an ancient artifact are soon overcome with a religious zeal and predict the imminent return of the Travelers.

## TECHNOLOGY AS A PROP

Finally, Imperial SF, unlike more contemporary science fiction, is not really about technology. That is, technology is obviously important, since it's the means by which adventurers travel from world to world, but it is not the focus of the genre. Throughout this book, there are comparatively few discussions of how the technology presented herein operates. That's by design rather than by omission. For one, there is no easy way to explain how, say, the D-Drive operates without resorting to pseudo-science and gobbledygook.

There's nothing wrong with such an approach, but it's one at variance with the tenets of Imperial SF, which, as a genre, is primarily focused on the adventures of individuals who travel from world to world solving problems that, while local in focus, have larger consequences for the entire setting. Their solutions usually have little to do with technology. Indeed, as noted earlier, Imperial SF does not assume that future humans are any better than contemporary ones simply because they have shinier technology. Indeed, Imperial SF is often slightly skeptical of technology and its settings often include various explanations as to why technological development has been retarded or otherwise progressed less far than

one might expect. Some of this springs from philosophical reasons but much of it has to do with the simple fact that too much technology can steal the limelight from the characters and that's a cardinal sin in both fiction and roleplaying games. Bear this in mind when creating THOUSAND SUNS adventures. There's nothing wrong with flashy gadgets and amazing devices, but they should always take a backseat to the characters.

## ADVENTURE GENERATOR

Sometimes, the Game Master might not be sure what sort of adventure he would like to create or he might decide that he's in a rut and needs a source of inspiration. In both cases, the adventure generator presented below can of great assistance. The generator is a series of five random tables, each of which provides a collection of elements that, when placed together, form the skeleton of an adventure. To create that skeleton, the GM uses the following sentence:

**The characters must [DO] [SOMETHING],  
at/near/to/from [LOCATION],  
but have to contend with [COMPLICATIONS]  
while being confronted by [OPPOSITION].**

Each word in a brackets is tied to one of the five tables below. The GM should roll two 12-sided dice for each table, the first roll indicating a number on the left-hand column and the second roll indicating a number along the top. At the intersection of the two numbers is a word or phrase that can then be plugged into the sentence above to create an adventure outline.

To give some idea of how to use the adventure generator, here are a couple of examples:

The GM rolls 3–2, 1–5, 8–4, 9–9, and 4–10, which results in “The characters must guide a rebel, at/near/to/from a planetoid, but have to contend with a recurring NPC, while being confronted with an explorer.” Talk about a peculiar collection of rolls! Still, with a little imagination, they can be made to work. Since the characters have to guide the rebel, it makes sense that they'll be taking him to a planetoid. Perhaps the rebel is on the run and needs to find a safe haven. Who's he running from? The explorer, presumably, but why? Perhaps the rebel has or knows something the rebel wants, such as the location of some unknown planet. Alternately, he could be a former associate of the rebel who turned against him. And what about the recurring NPC? That's where the GM gets to make a connection to previous adventures. Maybe there's a meddlesome merchant who's bedeviled the characters in the past or a government official who'd complicate matters if he found the characters in the company of a rebel. There are lots of options here for the GM to play with — and all from five random rolls.

For the next example, the GM rolls 10–3, 12–3, 8–12, 5–5, and 12–7, which results in “The characters must guard information at/near/to/from agricultural world, but have to contend with a transport problem, while being confronted with an esper.” This collection of rolls is easier to put together into a coherent adventure outline. The characters have been entrusted with some kind of important information, but, while en route to their ultimate destination, find their transportation inoperable and are forced down on an agricultural world. They're being pursued by an esper, perhaps a telepath who hopes to get close enough to the characters to steal the information from their own minds!

Naturally, some combinations of elements make more immediate sense than others, but it's amazing the ideas that can be easily generated with only a handful of dice rolls!

TABLE 10–1: DO

|    | 1–2         | 3–4      | 5–6         | 7–8            | 9–10        | 11–12         |
|----|-------------|----------|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1  | Assassinate | Assist   | Get Past    | Trade with     | Repel       | Build         |
| 2  | Combat      | Discover | Foil        | Contend with   | Destroy     | Examine       |
| 3  | Guide       | Avenge   | Rescue      | Negotiate with | Fight       | Gather        |
| 4  | Chase       | Reveal   | Defeat      | Blow Up        | Kill        | Hunt          |
| 5  | Disguise    | Find     | Assault     | Resist         | Steal       | Collect       |
| 6  | Move        | Protect  | Oppose      | Support        | Escape from | Pretend to Be |
| 7  | Conceal     | Liberate | Defend      | Fight          | Create      | Threaten      |
| 8  | Strike      | Escort   | Race        | Observe        | Safeguard   | Study         |
| 9  | Understand  | Deliver  | Serve       | Invade         | Battle      | Persuade      |
| 10 | Travel with | Aid      | Guard       | Join           | Trap        | Evaluate      |
| 11 | Track       | Retrieve | Meet        | Take           | Locate      | Entertain     |
| 12 | Obliterate  | Attack   | Investigate | Watch          | Save        | Survey        |

TABLE 10–2: SOMETHING

|    | 1–2          | 3–4                | 5–6         | 7–8          | 9–10          | 11–12            |
|----|--------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1  | Agent        | Enemy              | Rebel       | Mercenary    | Planet        | The Unexplained  |
| 2  | Princess     | Corporate Official | Strange     | Weapon       | Outcast       | Athlete          |
| 3  | Terrorist    | Rogue              | Woman       | Starship     | Wildspacer    | Survivalist      |
| 4  | Friend       | Treasure           | Item        | Computer     | Politician    | Journalist       |
| 5  | Smuggler     | Primitives         | Technology  | Pilot        | Priest        | Assassin         |
| 6  | Soldiers     | Corporation        | Rival       | Fleet        | New Race      | Recurring NPC    |
| 7  | Merchant     | Secret             | Alien       | Child        | Government    | Old Friend       |
| 8  | Disaster     | Technician         | Energy      | Creature     | Android       | Data             |
| 9  | Murderer     | Bounty Hunter      | Artifact    | Broker       | Warlike Alien | Governor         |
| 10 | Anomaly      | Ally               | Diplomat    | Warrior      | Love Interest | Military Officer |
| 11 | Organization | Discovery          | Man         | Robot        | The Travelers | Pirate           |
| 12 | Criminal     | Scientist          | Information | Law Enforcer | Captain       | Child            |

TABLE 10–3: LOCATION

|   | 1–2                    | 3–4               | 5–6              | 7–8                | 9–10               | 11–12                 |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Space Station          | Fortress          | Lawless World    | City               | City World         | Interdicted Planet    |
| 2 | Ice Planet             | Barren World      | Trading Center   | Deep Space         | Abandoned Colony   | Dead World            |
| 3 | In Orbit               | Asteroid Field    | Underwater       | Bar                | Alien Homeworld    | Service Academy       |
| 4 | Corporate Headquarters | Secret Base       | Devastated World | Quarantined Planet | Shipyards          | Aerial City           |
| 5 | Jump Point             | Research Facility | Water World      | Ruins              | Automated Facility | Capital               |
| 6 | Star                   | Wildspace         | Primitive World  | Underground        | University         | Character's Homeworld |
| 7 | Colony                 | Temple            | Alien World      | Neutral Planet     | Volcanic Planet    | Embassy               |

**TABLE 10—3: LOCATION**

|    | <b>1-2</b>          | <b>3- 4</b>      | <b>5- 6</b>     | <b>7- 8</b>        | <b>9- 10</b> | <b>11-12</b>       |
|----|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 8  | Jungle Planet       | Spaceport        | Pleasure Planet | Planetoid          | Travel Hub   | Agricultural World |
| 9  | Gas Giant           | Unexplored World | Military Base   | Space Habitat      | Comet        | Anarchic World     |
| 10 | In Transit          | The Marches      | Prison          | Lost Colony        | Library      | Stellar Phenomenon |
| 11 | Core World          | Desert Planet    | War Zone        | Illegal Settlement | Armada       | Roll Twice         |
| 12 | Governmental Center | Starship         | Casino          | Mining Facility    | D-Space      | Roll Three Times   |

**TABLE 10—4: COMPLICATIONS**

|    | <b>1-2</b>        | <b>3- 4</b>       | <b>5- 6</b>          | <b>7- 8</b>         | <b>9- 10</b>       | <b>11-12</b>          |
|----|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1  | None              | Travel Problems   | Mistrust             | Criminals           | Interested Parties | Money                 |
| 2  | Travel            | Legal Trouble     | Trap                 | Misdirection        | Scientific Problem | Differing Motivations |
| 3  | Computer Failure  | War               | Abduction            | Military Influence  | Trickery           | Double-cross          |
| 4  | Mistaken Identity | Attention         | Politics             | Contract            | Diplomacy          | Stowaway              |
| 5  | Language Barrier  | Rivalry           | Transport Problem    | Love Interest       | Vendetta           | Esper                 |
| 6  | Interference      | Distractions      | Sidetracked          | Anomaly             | Drugs              | Psi Phenomena         |
| 7  | Creature          | Security          | Equipment Failure    | Crash               | Insanity           | Recurring NPC         |
| 8  | The Unexplained   | Recurring NPC     | Disaster             | Mystery             | Invasion           | Revenge               |
| 9  | Betrayal          | Alien Psychology  | Desperation          | Corporate Influence | Recurring NPC      | Hazard                |
| 10 | Squabbling        | Exploration       | Government Influence | Bureaucracy         | Fear               | Accident              |
| 11 | Power Struggle    | Red Herring       | Barriers             | Disease             | Robot              | Annoying NPC          |
| 12 | Battle            | Primitive Culture | Theft                | Ambush              | Unwanted Attention | Old Enemies           |

**TABLE 10—5: OPPOSITION**

|    | <b>1-2</b>          | <b>3- 4</b>    | <b>5- 6</b>             | <b>7- 8</b>          | <b>9- 10</b> | <b>11-12</b>     |
|----|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1  | Government Official | Terrorists     | Gang                    | Mercenary            | Spy          | Survivalist      |
| 2  | Creature            | Shadowy Figure | Ship Captain            | Criminals            | Starship     | Doctor           |
| 3  | Ruler               | Stranger       | Law Enforcers           | Rebel                | Veteran      | Celebrity        |
| 4  | Former Ally         | Bounty Hunter  | Thief                   | Military             | Explorer     | Recurring NPC    |
| 5  | Android             | War            | Technological Breakdown | Religious Figure     | Lunatic      | None             |
| 6  | Scientist           | Conspiracy     | Hazardous Environment   | Navigational Trouble | Puzzle       | Secret Society   |
| 7  | Fanatic             | Merchant       | Superior Aliens         | Mysterious Aliens    | Time         | Colonists        |
| 8  | Friend              | Recurring NPC  | Invader                 | Outlaw               | Smuggler     | Activist         |
| 9  | Specialist          | Family Member  | Unidentified Vessel     | Traitor              | Belter       | Former Friend    |
| 10 | Wildspacer          | Clones         | Corporation             | Pilot                | Archeologist | Researcher       |
| 11 | Warlike Aliens      | Robot          | Technology Gone Amok    | Pirates              | Journalist   | Roll Twice       |
| 12 | None                | Assassin       | Artificial Intelligence | Esper                | Athlete      | Roll Three Times |

# AWARDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

At the end of an adventure, the Game Master should reward the players with experience points (XP). XP indicates the measure of what a character has accomplished. By learning from their in-game decisions, characters become more proficient. There are two different approaches to granting XP, depending on the wishes of the group: simple and complex.

## SIMPLE

The simple approach to XP is to give each character 1–4 experience points at the conclusion of an adventure, based both on how quickly the GM wishes characters to advance and how well the GM judges each player to have performed. “Well” is an entirely subjective term and up to the discretion of the Game Master, in consultation with the players.

## COMPLEX

The complex method demands more bookkeeping and results in slower but more “realistic” advancement, since characters improve themselves *by learning from their mistakes*. Whenever a character *fails* at a skill test, he makes a note of it. At the conclusion of the adventure, the player then initiates a Perception test for each of the noted skills. If the Perception test succeeds, the player then gains 1 XP to apply *toward that specific skill*. If the Perception test fails, however, no XP is gained. Successful use of any action point used in conjunction with a hook also grants a chance (1–6 on 1D12) of gaining 1 XP toward the purchase of another action point and associated hook (see below).

This method requires a player to keep track of the XP his character earns for each skill. Only when enough XP have been accrued for a particular skill can it be raised to the next rank.

## SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points can be spent to increase skills and abilities, using the table below:

TABLE 10–6: Experience Point Costs

| Trait          | XP Costs   |
|----------------|--|
| Ability        | Not applicable — abilities cannot generally be raised after character generation |
| New Skill      | 3 (for Rank 1)   |
| Existing Skill | ½ Current Rank   |
| Action Point   | 10   |

Please note that the acquisition of a new action point must be tied to the acquisition of a new hook. A new hook must make sense within the context of the character’s development in play. That is, a character cannot suddenly acquire a hook like “Heir to the Throne of Betelgeuse VII” when there has been no previous suggestion that the character was royalty and/or nothing in the campaign that revealed his previously unknown blue blood.

A new action point and associated hook function normally according to the rules laid out in **Chapter 2** (*Hooks and Action Points*, p. 17) and **Chapter 5** (*Hooks*, p. 83). Some GMs may wish to limit the number of action points and hooks a character may acquire through XP. As a practical matter, it’s generally best for no character to have more than 10 action points or hooks, but a GM may ignore this suggestion or institute a lower cap as he deems best for his campaign.





Observing a disaster from afar.



Looking for new markets among the worlds of the Thousand Suns.

# CHAPTER 11: WORLDS AND TRADE

Real unity is impossible — the universe is too large. The common experience of the opening of space ended forever the possibility of one common culture. Which is just as well. It would have been dull.

— Alexei Panshin, *The Thurb Revolution* (1968)

# CHAPTER 11: WORLDS AND TRADE

The action of *THOUSAND SUNS* place in the future, after humanity has left its homeworld and ventured into the boundless reaches of the galaxy. While a small portion of one possible presentation of the galaxy is described in **Chapters 14** (starting on p. 240) and **15** (starting on p. 260) that still leaves *a lot* of galactic real estate left to create. This chapter provides some assistance to the Game Master (and, by extension, to players as well) in designing the myriad worlds on which adventures can take place. This chapter also includes a simple system for speculative trading for the benefit of those players whose characters hope to make a fortune for themselves by buying and selling exotic merchandise among the worlds of the Thousand Suns.

## SECTOR DESIGN

A sector is a grouping of star systems connected by jumplines organized according to their D-Drive pseudo-proximity. A sector is thus a somewhat arbitrary unit, designed for convenience rather than as an indicator of anything existing in the real world. That said, most sectors “make sense” in that worlds so grouped together often have a shared history or culture or some other defining characteristic that goes beyond their jumpline connections. This isn’t always the case, of course, but GMs are encouraged to think of sectors as the interstellar equivalents of “states” or “provinces” in the administrative sense, each with their own unique flavor and local color. Not only does this approach make it easier to distinguish, say, Betelgeuse sector from Proxima sector, but it also creates story seeds that can be used to good effect later.

## A SIMPLE APPROACH

The D-Drive functions according to principles that have an erratic connection to normal space. Consequently, creating a sector map isn’t quite like creating a map of the United States or Canada. The map is actually rather abstract and uses jumplines rather than physical borders or landmarks. Likewise, the “distances” involved are the travel times between worlds for ships journeying through D-space. All of these factors make creating a sector a very simple affair.

The GM does not need any special paper to create a sector map; any large sheet of paper will do. Each world is represented by a circle on the paper. Each world should be given a name, either at the time it is placed on the map or later. Sometimes planets are named after their physical or social characteristics, so that a world with very high mountain ranges might be named Pinnacle, for example. Sometimes, planets are named after their discoverers, such as Emmet’s World. And sometimes worlds are given numerical designations, such as Alpha Draconis III or even M-32. Of course, worlds with native species might have names in their own languages (which may or may not be used by Terrans). There is no limit to the approaches possible to naming and, most importantly, there is no single “right” approach.

Place a single world on the map and then roll on the table below.

**TABLE 11–1: World Jumphines**

| 1D12 Roll | Number of Jumphines |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 1–2       | 0                   |
| 3–8       | 1                   |
| 9–11      | 2                   |
| 12        | 3+                  |

Draw a number of lines from the first world corresponding to the results of the table above. At the end of each line, draw a circle to represent the world on the other end of the jumpline. Make a 1D12 roll for each jumpline to determine its “length,” that is, the number of weeks it takes to traverse using D-Drive. Continue this process until either there are no more worlds with unmapped jumplines or until the sector feels “big enough.” There is no ideal size to a sector, though somewhere between 40 and 100 worlds usually provides more than enough diversity for most campaigns. Choose at least a couple of worlds, generally around the edges of the map, to have trans-sector capabilities; they’re the ones that lead to other sectors among the Thousand Suns.

## MORE THAN A MAP

As noted earlier, a sector may be a unit of convenience but that does not mean there is no logic to its organization. The GM should take a look at the map he’s created. Pay close attention to the distances between worlds. Are the worlds close together in terms of travel time or are they far apart? Are there any “clusters” of short travel times or are all the worlds far-flung and weeks away from one another? After generating the details of the worlds themselves, take a look at each planet and compare them to their closest neighbors. Are there any obvious connections between nearby worlds? What about obvious rivalries or tensions? Are there any native species in the sector? High population worlds that might dominate the sector through sheer numbers?

There are, of course, an infinite number of ways to interpret the details of a sector and that’s part of the fun of designing them. Two sectors, with the exact same world details, could be quite different from one another, depending on how the Game Master chooses to interpret those details. Differences are important, because it’s all too easy to make one world or one sector seem just like every other one. Where possible, avoid that temptation. The Thousand Suns is a volume of space continually, literally, thousands of planets. Consequently, it’s all too easy for those worlds to blend into one another after a while, making Aldebaran IV seem no more unique than Princo Georgio. Certainly there’s no need to provide detailed histories and societies for worlds that are no more than a stopover for the characters as they journey toward a farther destination. At the same time, the GM should try to think of at least one thing for every world that makes it special, something that sets it apart from its neighbors. That way, he’s ready in case his players decide that a world he thought was uninteresting is worth exploring further.

Like worlds, sectors are intended to spark adventures. They exist to give GMs a way to parcel out small pieces of the Thousand Suns setting into digestible chunks. There is no need to map the entire galaxy in the first few sessions of play. Indeed, entire campaigns could profitably be set on a single planet. Think of all the adventures you could set on Terra alone! Multiply that by thousands of worlds and it’s clear there’s no need to design more than a

single sector to start off a campaign. Start small and build from there. The important thing is not to be overwhelmed by the immensity of space or the breadth of the Imperial SF approach to science fiction. Keep things in perspective and it will all be much more manageable.

A sample sector, Limzono Sector, is provided in **Chapter 15** (starting on p. 260) as an example you can use in designing your own sectors. Future supplements to *THOUSAND SUNS* may detail new sectors.

## WORLD DESIGN

Although *THOUSAND SUNS* is, among other things, a game of interstellar travel and exploration, the reality is that most adventures will take place not aboard a starship or in the cold depths of space but on the surface of one or more planets. This section presents an easy-to-use system for generating these planets.

This system assumes that most star systems generally have only one world of significance within them. There may be other inhabited worlds within any given system, but they tend to have smaller populations and limited political clout. The system presented here can easily be used to generate these lesser worlds in a star system, but the GM is advised to use his judgment in accepting the results. Of course, there may be systems with several worlds of importance, such as Sol, where both Luna and Mars might boast high populations, and this is a perfectly legitimate option should the GM choose it.

## WORLD GENERATION

Presented here are several tables to aid the Game Master in generating worlds for use in his *THOUSAND SUNS* campaign. By default, these tables each use either 1D12 or 2D12 to generate the most important characteristics of a world and its inhabitants. However, the GM is under no obligation to use random rolls in creating worlds for his campaign. Indeed, a good mix of random rolls and deliberate choice is often the best mix, since this approach both avoids the most nonsensical results of pure random generation while still introducing elements of the unexpected.

The world generation process consists of the following steps:

1. **Primary World Type**
2. **World Diameter**
3. **World Atmospheres**
4. **World Climate**
5. **World Hydrographics**
6. **World Population**
7. **World Government**
8. **World Law Level**
9. **World Tech Level**
10. **World Hooks**

It should be noted that *THOUSAND SUNS* uses an almost purely *descriptive* format for worlds, which is to say, it generally uses terms that give players and GMs alike a sense of what the world is like to visit rather than exhaustive details about its precise atmospheric composition, albedo, or the types of rare minerals to be found beneath its surface. Rarely



is such information directly useful in running scenarios and when such details do become important, the GM is free to invent them as he wishes, in accordance with the other details he has already created. Consequently, this chapter includes no formulae or equations to calculate surface pressure or planetary mass or anything of the kind. *THOUSAND SUNS* is a game of science fiction adventure, not astrophysics, and the world generation rules presented here reflect that emphasis without apology.

1. PRIMARY WORLD TYPE

Though there may be other habitable (or inhabited) worlds in a system, there is usually one that is considered the most important, whose type is generated on the table below.

TABLE 11–1: World Type (1D12)

| Roll  | Type        | Diameter Modifier | Temperature Modifier | Population Modifier |
|-------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1–2   | Asteroid    | n/a               | n/a                  | –2                  |
| 3     | Satellite   | –5                | +5                   | –1                  |
| 4–10  | Terrestrial | 0                 | 0                    | +1                  |
| 11–12 | Hostile     | 0                 | 0                    | –2                  |

**Asteroid:** An asteroid world is a rocky object without an atmosphere. It may be a singular object floating somewhere in the solar system or it may be part of a belt in a stable orbit around a star. In either case, the world is an airless bit of space debris, albeit a large one. The climate of always freezing and they possess no atmosphere, water, or gravity.

**Hostile:** A hostile world is a world whose surface conditions are incompatible with human life.

**Satellite:** A satellite world is a moon of another, uninhabitable world, typically a gas giant. The world may well be one of the few habitable objects in the entire star system or may exist for some scientific, commercial, or military purpose.

**Terrestrial:** A terrestrial world is one whose environmental conditions are broadly hospitable to human and other life.

why so many terrestrial worlds?

More than half the worlds generated using this system are classified as terrestrial, which is at odds with what 21<sup>st</sup> century astronomy, which has not yet found a single extrasolar world at all like our own. As noted above, *THOUSAND SUNS* readily dispenses with scientific rigor in the name of fun and it's usually much more interesting to adventure on worlds compatible with human life. GMs who desire more realism can easily make terrestrial worlds much less common. Another possible explanation is that the Travelers (p. 253) had a preference for terrestrial worlds and so manipulated many jump points to link them to systems with such worlds.

Creating Kall: 1. Primary World Type

The GM rolls 1D12 and gets 9, meaning that Kall is a terrestrial world.



## 2. WORLD DIAMETER

The primary world's diameter has an impact on its surface gravity, which is why it is important to generate it. The table below assumes that the primary world has a density similar to that of Terra. If the GM wishes it to be more or less dense, its surface gravity will increase or decrease respectively.

TABLE 11–2: World Diameter (1D12)

| Roll      | Diameter | Typical Surface Gravity | Roll | Diameter  | Typical Surface Gravity |
|-----------|----------|-------------------------|------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1 or less | 1000 km  | Micro-gravity           | 7    | 8000 km   | 0.45                    |
| 2         | 1500 km  | 0.05                    | 8    | 9500 km   | 0.7                     |
| 3         | 3000 km  | 0.15                    | 9    | 11,000 km | 0.9                     |
| 4         | 4000 km  | 0.20                    | 10   | 13,000 km | 1.0                     |
| 5         | 5000 km  | 0.25                    | 11   | 14,500 km | 1.25                    |
| 6         | 6500 km  | 0.35                    | 12   | 16,000 km | 1.4                     |

**Note:** Do not roll on this table for asteroid worlds. Each such world is generally less than 1000 km in diameter and may in fact may not be a single body but rather several, each of them fairly small in size compared to other types of worlds.

## 3. WORLD ATMOSPHERE

The type of atmosphere a world has depends heavily on its type, as shown on Table 11–1 above.

**Asteroid:** An asteroid world has no atmosphere.

**Hostile:** A hostile world possesses a “hazardous” atmosphere, which is not breathable, either due to a total lack of oxygen (or indeed any other gases) or because the gases that make them up are insidious, corrosive, or otherwise dangerous. Space suits are required.

**Satellite:** If a satellite world has a diameter of at least 6500 km, it possesses the same range of atmospheres as a terrestrial world. Otherwise, a “thin” atmosphere, owing to a lack of either oxygen or sufficient oxygen to support life. Breathing masks are thus recommended..

**Terrestrial:** A terrestrial world possesses a “standard” oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere on a roll of 1–6 on 1D12. On a roll of 7–12, it possesses a “near-standard” atmosphere, which is breathable but tainted with a contaminant of some kind. Such contaminants are dangerous to Terrans, meaning that filter masks may be required. The exact nature of the contaminant is up to the GM.

### Creating Kall: 2.World Diameter

Rolling 1D12, the GM gets 10, which means that Kall has a diameter of 13,000 km and thus a surface gravity of 1.0, making it very similar to Terra.

### Creating Kall: 3.World Atmosphere

Kall is a terrestrial world and the GM rolls 1D12, with a result of 6 meaning that it has a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere — again, just like Terra.

# 4. WORLD CLIMATE

A general sense of the world’s climate is important to know for running adventures on its surface. Naturally, some areas on a world, particularly at the poles, will have different temperature ranges than those listed on the table below.

TABLE 11–3: World Climate (1D12)

| Roll  | Climate    | Temperature Range |
|-------|------------|-------------------|
| 1     | Blistering | Above 45° C       |
| 2–5   | Warm       | 30 to 45° C       |
| 6–9   | Temperate  | 0 to 30° C        |
| 10–11 | Cool       | to –15° C         |
| 12+   | Freezing   | Below ° C         |

# 5. WORLD HYDROGRAPHICS (1D12)

Roll 1D12–2 and multiply by 10% to determine the percentage of the world covered with liquid, primarily water. Asteroid worlds always have a hydrographic percentage of 0%. Hostile worlds are unlikely to have much (or any) water on their surfaces, so this percentage refers to some other liquid, such as hydrocarbons or ammonia.

## Creating Kall: 4. World Climate

Rolling 7 on 1D12 and consulting Table 11-3, the GM discovers that Kall has a temperate climate. So far, this world doesn’t stand out as particularly noteworthy. In fact, it’s kind of boring.

## Creating Kall: 5. World Hydrographics

A 1D12-2 roll yields a result of 1. Multiplied by 10%, that tells the GM that Kall has only 10% of its surface covered by water. Now we’re getting somewhere: Kall seems to be a desert planet.

## coping with improbable results

The advantage of a random world generation system is that it’s quick and easy to use. Most of the time, it will produce very straightforward worlds whose various elements make sense and which the GM can easily integrate into his campaign. In a few cases, it will create unexpected and indeed unusual results that, with some thought and imagination, can be resolved. At the same time, the GM should always be prepared to disregard results of which he can’t make sense. Like everything else in *THOUSAND SUNS*, the world generation system is a useful tool that should be used or dispensed with when appropriate.

6. WORLD POPULATION

World population is a reflection of how many sapients permanently live on its surface. Worlds in the Core tend to be more heavily populated (and crowded) than those elsewhere.

TABLE 11—4: World Population (1D12)

| Roll   | Population            | Law Level Modifier |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| –3 — 2 | Uninhabited           | n/a                |
| –1–0   | Tens                  | –2                 |
| 1      | Hundreds              | –2                 |
| 2      | Thousands             | –2                 |
| 3–4    | Tens of Thousands     | –1                 |
| 5–6    | Hundreds of Thousands | –1                 |
| 7–8    | Millions              | 0                  |
| 9–10   | Tens of Millions      | +1                 |
| 11–12  | Hundreds of Millions  | +1                 |
| 13     | Billions              | +2                 |
| 14     | Tens of Billions      | +2                 |
| 15     | Hundreds of Billions  | +2                 |

**Additional Modifiers:** +1 if Core, –1 if the Marches, +1 (1–6)/–1 (7–12) if Wildspace, +1 if Homeworld (see p. 209).

World population refers only to the number of permanent residents. Some worlds, such as government centers, may have a large transient population as well. These individuals are not included in the world population figure.

Creating Kall: 6. World Population

Since Kall is in the Marches, it suffers a -1 penalty to its population roll. However, it’s also a terrestrial world, so it gains a +1 bonus to the roll. The two modifiers cancel each other out, so, when the GM rolls 1D12 and gets a 7, the result stands. Kall has a population of millions, with the GM deciding is 5 million.

## 7. WORLD GOVERNMENT

Each world has a single government type, determined by rolling on the table below.

**TABLE 11–5: World Population (1D12)**

| Roll  | Government Type          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| –1–1  | Corporate                |
| 2–3   | Governor                 |
| 4–5   | Direct Democracy         |
| 6–7   | Oligarchy                |
| 8–10  | Dictatorship             |
| 11–13 | Monarchy                 |
| 14–16 | Representative Democracy |
| 17–18 | Junta                    |
| 19–20 | Theocracy                |
| 21–22 | Multiple States          |
| 23    | Criminal                 |
| 24    | Tribal                   |
| 25    | Anarchy                  |

**Additional Modifiers:** +1 if Wildspace (1–6), –1 if Wildspace (7–12).

**Anarchy:** There are no governmental units larger than families, if that. If the world’s population is low, anarchic worlds may simply never have developed a need for a formal government. Alternately, an anarchic world might be one in the throes of a disaster or rebuilding after one, in which case no central authority has reasserted itself. In rare cases, a world may be “philosophically” anarchist, which is to say that its inhabitants are so skeptical of political power that they have chosen to live without formal governmental authority.

**Corporate:** A corporate world is one whose central authority is a corporation or megacorporation. The corporation may choose to govern directly through its own organs or indirectly through representatives selected from the local populace. In either case, it is the corporation and its interests that are paramount and whether it governs justly or unjustly is only a reflection of its concern for the financial bottom line.

**Criminal:** A criminal organization has assumed control of the world. They may do this openly or through proxies.

**Dictatorship:** One individual rules the world through personal decree. He may do so justly or unjustly, but he does so with few or any legal or constitutional barriers. Some worlds have elected dictators, who then rule for life or after a lengthy term, but most dictators seized power through force and maintain it in the same fashion.

**Direct Democracy:** A direct democracy is one in which most, if not all, important decisions are put to the vote of its citizens. Direct democracies seem to work best on worlds with either low populations or at least Class VII technology.



Traveler ruins on Elysium.

**Governor:** For whatever reason, an official appointed by some authority offworld governs the planet. This could be the result of a new colony being established, a war, a disaster, or something else.

**Junta:** The world's military has seized control of the government and rules either as a temporary measure or permanently.

**Monarchy:** A king, queen, or some other titled individual governs the world. A monarchy differs from a dictatorship in that it is usually a constitutional form of government. The monarch may govern directly or through subordinates, but he is legally recognized as the world's ruler and has the weight of tradition to support his claim.

**Multiple States:** The world has no single unified government but is instead home to a number of independent states. Those states may be at odds with one another or may work together in an alliance or federation. In the latter cases, the world might have a functional world government but one rent with internal conflict or strife to some degree. In the Thousand Suns meta-setting (starting on p. 240), no world subject to the Concord may have this government type. If such a result is rolled, you should either re-roll or devise some explanation as to why this type of government has escaped the strictures of the Concord.

**Oligarchy:** A small group of people, usually un-elected, governs the planet. As with dictatorships, the rule of an oligarchy can be popular or unpopular, just or unjust, depending on the local situation.

**Representative Democracy:** A representative democracy is one in which the citizenry elects individuals to handle the governance of the world. Representative democracies tend to be ponderous and slow and provide many opportunities for corruption, but they also less susceptible to public whims than are direct democracies.

**Theocracy:** A religious figure or religious organization governs the world in accordance with its beliefs. The exact structure of the government depends greatly on the religion's beliefs, as does whether the theocracy governs justly or unjustly.

**Tribal:** A tribal government is where kinship plays an important role in its operation. Tribal governments can be quite varied, with a great deal depending on how membership in a tribe is determined and how easily an individual can move from one tribe to another. Though many tribal governments are backward by interstellar standards, they need not be and, if technologically advanced, can be surprisingly sophisticated, even progressive.

### Creating Kall: 7. World Government

For its government, the GM rolls 2D12 and gets 5, which means Kall is a direct democracy.

## 8. WORLD LAW LEVEL

Law level represents the degree to which the local government exerts its authority over its citizens. The legal modifier on Table 11–6 is a penalty to any tests involving the local government and its agents, including law enforcers.

**TABLE 11–6: Law Level (1D12)**

| Roll | Legal Modifier | Law Level     |
|------|----------------|---------------|
| 1–3  | 0              | Open          |
| 4–6  | –1             | Free          |
| 7–8  | –2             | Permissive    |
| 9    | –3             | Restrictive   |
| 10   | –4             | Authoritarian |
| 11+  | –5             | Repressive    |

**Additional Modifiers:** +1 if Core, –1 if the Marches

**Open:** Open Worlds have few explicit laws, though they may have local customs governing personal behavior. They do not generally restrict weapons possession, although military grade armaments may draw the attention of what little law enforcement there is on the world.

**Free:** Free Worlds have few laws governing only the most egregious breaches of the peace and law enforcement is light. They restrict the possession of easily concealable weapons not detectable by standard means. Explosives of any kind and military grade weaponry are frowned upon.

**Permissive:** Permissive worlds have laws intended to protect their inhabitants from violence and deception, backed up by agents of the state prepared to enforce those laws. They restrict the possession of all concealable weapons, military grade weapons and explosives as well as all portable energy weapons except to those licensed to bear them.

**Restrictive:** Restrictive worlds have a large number of laws intended to protect their inhabitants from a wide variety of perceived dangers and law enforcers are commonplace. In addition to the restrictions of permissive worlds noted above, restrictive worlds forbid the all portable energy weapons except to agents of the state.

**Authoritarian:** Authoritarian worlds have many laws designed not only to protect their inhabitants from perceived dangers but also to encourage “proper living” according to a creed or ideology. Law enforcers are commonplace and have wide powers. In addition to the restrictions of restrictive worlds noted above, authoritarian worlds also restrict all firearms of any kind except to those licensed to bear them.

**Repressive:** Repressive worlds have laws governing nearly every facet of life and it is easy to run afoul of them through ignorance. Law enforcers are ubiquitous and have almost unrestricted powers in carrying out their duties. In addition to the restrictions of authoritarian worlds noted above, repressive worlds also forbid all firearms except to agents of the state.

### Creating Kall: 8. World Law Level

Being in the Marches, Kall has a –1 modifier to the law level roll, whose result is 10 — “authoritarian.”  
That’s definitely an unexpected result!



9. WORLD TECH LEVEL

Tech level refers to the highest level of technology available through local manufacturers. In many cases, higher tech items are available for purchase through offworld vendors, but they are both highly prized and expensive, making them difficult to obtain. Tech level is almost entirely a descriptive quality in *THOUSAND SUNS*, which is to say, it has no specific game effect.

TABLE 11—7: Tech Level (1D12)

| Roll | Tech Level   |
|------|--|
| 0    | Stone Age (Class I): Stone tools, hunter/gatherer society  |
| 1    | Iron Age (Class II): Metal, pottery, basic architecture and mathematics  |
| 2    | Medieval (Class III): Distilling, windmills, basic metallurgy, waterwheels, clockworks, and other simple machines, feudal society.   |
| 3    | Modern (Class IV): Simple manufacturing, advanced metallurgy and mathematics.  |
| 4    | Industrial Age (Class V): Steam engines, electricity generation, crystal radios, simple tubes, mechanical and electromechanical computers, antibiotics.                                    |
| 5    | Information Age (Class VI): Advanced electronics, space travel, computers, controlled fission, computer networks, GPS, basic DNA mapping, simple genetic engineering and gene screening.   |
| 6–9  | Stellar (Class VII): D-Drive, contragravity, controlled fusion, simple robots, advanced genetic engineering, basic life extension, tissue regeneration, cryostasis.                        |
| 10+  | Interstellar (Class VIII): Synaptic computers, miniature contragravity, small fusion reactors, advanced robots, advanced life extension, limited genetic modification of adult life forms. |

**Additional Modifiers:** +1 if Core, +1 (1–6)/–1 (7–12) if Wildspace, +3 If Asteroid or Hostile Atmosphere and not Homeworld (see p. 209).

tech level

Something to bear in mind is that travel in the Thousand Suns, while not always fast, is nevertheless pretty constant. Only the most far-flung worlds, generally in Wildspace, are so far removed the major jump lines so as to be completely disconnected from trade routes. Consequently, most worlds have access to advanced technology, at least for their wealthy elites, if not for their middle and lower classes. These items may be expensive, as noted, but it will be a rare world where, for example, a blaster pistol or Unicom is completely unavailable, let alone unknown.

Creating Kall: 9. World Tech Level

The 1D12 roll for tech level is a 6, meaning that Kall has Class VII technology, the standard level of technology for most Terran worlds.

## 10. WORLD HOOKS (2D12)

Like characters, worlds can have hooks, brief descriptors that reveal something about their natures. Unlike character hooks, world hooks are purely descriptive and have no game mechanical benefits or drawbacks. Roll twice on the table below for each world to determine its hooks. If the same result comes up twice, the world in question has only one hook — after all, some worlds are simply more interesting than others!

TABLE 11–8: World Hooks (2D12)

| Roll | Hook           | Roll | Hook                     |
|------|----------------|------|--------------------------|
| 2    | Academic       | 14   | Interdicted              |
| 3    | Administrative | 15   | Luxury/Rare Goods        |
| 4    | Agricultural   | 16   | Manufacturing/Processing |
| 5    | Civil Strife   | 17   | Military                 |
| 6    | Colony         | 18   | Other                    |
| 7    | Commercial     | 19   | Psi Quirk                |
| 8    | Conspiracy     | 20   | Resource Extraction      |
| 9    | Disaster       | 21   | Religious Site           |
| 10   | Entertainment  | 22   | Ruins                    |
| 11   | Factionalized  | 23   | Weird Cultural Practice  |
| 12   | Hidden Base    | 24   | Xenophilic/Xenophobic    |
| 13   | Homeworld      |      |                          |

**Academic:** The world is a center intellectual or scientific advancement. This could mean that the planet is home to a prestigious institution of learning or a research station of some type, but it could just as easily mean that it is a historical site of some interest.

**Administrative:** The world plays a role in interstellar governance, perhaps being home to an important department, ministry, or other organ of the State.

**Agricultural:** The world produces some form of natural comestible not derived from animals. This could be something as simple as grains or vegetables or something as exotic as psychoactive fungi. The foodstuff must be a significant trade item to neighboring worlds, as worlds with this profile are not home to subsistence farmers.

**Civil Strife:** There is ongoing strife between one or more groups on the world, perhaps as the result of political, racial, or religious tension. If the world's law level is high enough, there may be active repression against one or more of the groups involved in the strife, whereas a low law level world may be the site of regular violence.

### Creating Kall: 10. World Hooks

Now, it's time to determine two hooks for Kall. The first 2D12 roll results in a 5 — "civil strife." The second roll is 20, which translates into a "religious site."

**Colony:** The inhabitants of this world are immigrants, having come to the world from elsewhere. The nature of the colonists' original home and their current reasons for having left it determine a great deal about the world and its society.

**Commercial:** The world is an important center of trade and commerce. It could be home to one or more corporations or be a meeting place for independent traders. Whatever the case, the primary purpose of this world is economic.

**Conspiracy:** The world is the seat of a powerful conspiracy acting behind the scenes. The conspiracy may be local in scope or it may extend its tentacles to other nearby worlds. Regardless, the conspiracy is the true power on this world.

**Disaster:** This world is either in the throes of a disaster or has recently suffered the effects of one. Consequently, its society may be in some degree of disarray.

**Entertainment:** This world exists to provide diversions to those who visit it. Such a world could be a resort planet, a center for the production of holovideo dramas, an amusement park, a nature preserve, or something else, but its main purpose is entertaining the inhabitants of other worlds.

**Factionalized:** Despite appearances of unity, the world is home to one or more powerful factions that rival the world government in terms of their power and influence. This hook generally makes no sense on worlds with Multiple States.

**Hidden Base:** Located on the world is the hidden base of an organization of some significance. It may be a stronghold of rebels against the State, a lair of space pirates, or a classified branch of the military. The existence and nature of the base may be the subject of rumors, but its truth is not widely known.

**Homeworld:** The planet is the birthplace of one or more sapient species, who make up the majority of its population. See **Chapter 12** (starting on p. 216) for more information on creating new sapient species.

**Interdicted:** For some reason, free travel to and from the world is restricted, possibly even forbidden. Possible reasons include a plague, technology gone amok, or dangerous local organisms. The local law level should provide some guidelines as to how difficult it is to get on or off the world.

**Luxury/Rare Goods:** The world produces luxury and/or rare goods of interest to neighboring worlds or even the wider interstellar community. These goods can range from exquisite ice wine to valuable hardwoods to sculptures. The goods can be manufactured or natural, but they always command a premium prices offworld.

**Manufacturing/Processing:** The world is home to one or more production facilities that create goods for sale elsewhere. This can be done by hand, automation, robotics, nanotechnology, or other methods. The goods could be as small as personal chronometers or as large as starships.

**Military:** The world is employed by the military for some purpose, such as a base, shipyard, or even a military academy.

**Other:** Create a new hook!

**Psi Quirk:** This world has an unusual perspective on psi powers. Roll 1D12. On a roll of 1–4, the inhabitants hate and fear espers, restricting their movements on the planet. On a roll of 5–8, the inhabitants hold espers in high regard. On a roll of 9–12, the world's culture employs espers in an unusual role, such as law enforcers, judges, or religious leaders.

**Resource Extraction:** The world's primary industry is the extraction or reclamation of valuable natural resources, such as diamonds or uranium or gadolinium.

**Religious Site:** The world is a site of significance to one or more religions, perhaps because of some event that took place on its surface in the past, such as a holy birth or a miracle. The world is now a pilgrimage destination for adherents of the faith in question.

**Ruins:** Located somewhere on the world are ancient ruins of alien or possibly Traveler origin.

**Weird Cultural Practice:** The local culture has one or more noteworthy cultural practices that are immediately noticeable to offworlders, such as wearing elaborate headgear, strict gender separation, or treating robots as citizens.

**Xenophilic/Xenophobic:** The world either warmly welcomes (1–6) or harshly rejects (7–12) visitors from other worlds.

### Creating Kall: Final Touches

What does it all mean? Looking over the results, it appears that Kall is a desert world whose several million inhabitants govern themselves through a direct democracy but whose laws are authoritarian. The GM decides that most Kallian laws are enacted through referenda, regularly offered to its voters through an extensive planetary computer network. Taking note of the “religious site” hook, he also decides that the world is the birthplace of a important religious leader whom much of the population reveres as a prophet and who live their lives in accordance with his teachings. Of course, the “civil strife” hook suggests that there’s conflict between believers and non-believers, which could explain the local legal situation — the populace is using referenda to enact restrictive laws as a way to strike against those with whom they disagree about the prophet’s religion. Suddenly Kall seems like a lot more interesting a planet!

## SPECULATIVE TRADE

As explained in **Chapter 14** (see *Economics*, p. 255), there are items — primarily exotic, luxury, and illegal goods — from which money can be made by transporting them across interstellar distances. Because the profit on such items are comparatively small, the mega-corporations have largely ceded speculation in them to independent traders and small merchant houses. This section provides some simple rules to adjudicate such trade.

### TRADE PROCEDURE

Characters with cargo space aboard a starship and the financial means to purchase trade goods may attempt to engage in speculation. To do that, the characters must first determine what goods (and how much) are available for purchase. This is done by rolling on the Trade Goods Available table below. The units available (in tons) is then determined. These units are the total number available for purchase. Characters may purchase as few or as many as they wish. Units may also be split, but doing so incurs a penalty of 1–6% ( $1D12 \div 2$ ).

TABLE 11–9: Trade Goods Available

| 2D12 Roll | Trade Goods           | Base Unit Cost | Units Available (Tons) | Trade Code |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------|
| 2         | Proscribed Technology | 60,000\$       | 1D12                   | LT, MT, HT |
| 3         | Illegal Stimulants    | 20,000\$       | 1D12 ÷ 2               | LG         |
| 4         | Proscribed Weaponry   | 80,000\$       | 3D12                   | LT, MT, HT |
| 5         | Grain                 | 500\$          | 1D12 × 10              | F          |
| 6         | Lumber                | 800\$          | 1D12 × 10              | LG         |
| 7         | Fruits/Vegetables     | 1000\$         | 6D12                   | F          |
| 8         | Meat                  | 2000\$         | 1D12 × 5               | F          |
| 9         | Legal Stimulants      | 2500\$         | 5D12                   | LG         |
| 10        | Textiles              | 3500\$         | 6D12                   | LG         |
| 11        | Organic Polymers      | 4000\$         | 1D12 × 10              | C          |
| 12        | Liquor                | 6000\$         | 5D12                   | LG         |
| 13        | Wine                  | 7000\$         | 5D12                   | LG         |
| 14        | Spices                | 7000\$         | 3D12                   | LG         |
| 15        | Legal Intoxicants     | 8000\$         | 3D12                   | LG         |
| 16        | Live Animals          | 9000\$         | 5D12                   | F          |
| 17        | Pharmaceuticals       | 9000\$         | 1D12 ÷ 2               | C          |
| 18        | Illegal Intoxicants   | 15,000\$       | 1D12 ÷ 2               | LG         |
| 19        | Works of Art          | 15,000\$       | 1D12 ÷ 2               | LG         |
| 20        | Crystals/Gems         | 20,000\$       | 1D12 ÷ 2               | M          |
| 21        | Biochemicals          | 40,000\$       | 2D12                   | C          |
| 22        | Historical Artifacts  | 30,000\$       | 1D12 ÷ 2               | LG         |
| 23        | Handicrafts           | 10,000\$       | 1D12 × 10              | LG         |
| 24        | Rare Elements         | 100,000\$      | 1D12 ÷ 2               | M          |

Once the characters have determined what goods are available for purchase and in what quantities, they can then determine the purchase price by making a Bargain (Trade) test. The degrees of success (or failure) determine the purchase price multiplier, as shown on the Trade Value table below. For example, suppose a character is trying to buy several units of rare pharmaceuticals and achieves 6 degrees of success. On the table, there is a 0.9 purchase price multiplier for 6 degrees of success. Multiplying 0.9 and the base unit cost of pharmaceuticals (9000\$) yields 8100\$, which is the price per unit at which the character is able to purchase this trade good.

TABLE 11–10: Trade Value

| Degrees (+/-) | Purchase Price Multiplier | Sale Price Multiplier |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 12+           | 0.8                       | 2.0                   |
| 9–11          | 0.85                      | 1.75                  |
| 6–8           | 0.9                       | 1.5                   |
| 3–5           | 0.95                      | 1.25                  |
| 0–2           | 1.0                       | 1.0                   |
| –1 to –2      | 1.25                      | 0.95                  |
| –3 to –5      | 1.5                       | 0.9                   |
| –6 to –8      | 1.75                      | 0.85                  |
| –9 to –11+    | 2                         | 0.8                   |

When it comes time to sell an item, the character once again makes a Bargain (Trade) test, with the degrees of success (or failure) determining the sale price multiplier. It is important to remember that the sale price multiplier, like the purchase price multiplier is applied to the base unit cost, even if the character had purchased a trade good at a price higher or lower than the base unit cost.

## ADDITIONAL RULES

The system presented above is intended to be very simple and straightforward, but some players and Game Masters may desire further complexity. For them, the following additional rules may be employed.

### BROKERS

If the characters wish, they may employ a local broker to aid in the sale (but not purchase) of goods. A broker grants a +1 to the TN of the Bargain (Trade) test, up to a maximum of +5. Brokers work on commission, earning 5% of the final sale price per +1 TN. No more than a single broker can be employed per sale.

### BUREAUCRACY

If a character engaged in the sale of goods also possesses Bureaucracy (Business), he may use it to aid him in his Bargain (Trade) test, according to the rules laid out in **Chapter 5** (see *Complementary Skills*, p. 78).

### SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Each type of trade goods has a code listed on Table 11–11: Trade Codes. These codes are used in conjunction with the Table 11–12: Supply and Demand.

TABLE 11–11: Trade Codes

| Code | Meaning                          |
|------|----------------------------------|
| C    | Chemicals                        |
| F    | Foodstuffs                       |
| HT   | High tech (Tech Levels VII–VIII) |
| LG   | Luxury Goods                     |
| LT   | Low tech (Tech Levels I–III)     |
| M    | Metals and Minerals              |
| MT   | Medium tech (Tech Levels IV–VI)  |

Depending on a world's tech level, there are varying degrees of supply and demand for each type of trade goods. The first number is the supply multiplier and the second is demand modifier. These multipliers are applied to the base unit cost before any other modifiers. If the supply multiplier is listed as —, that means that type of trade good is unavailable on the world in question.

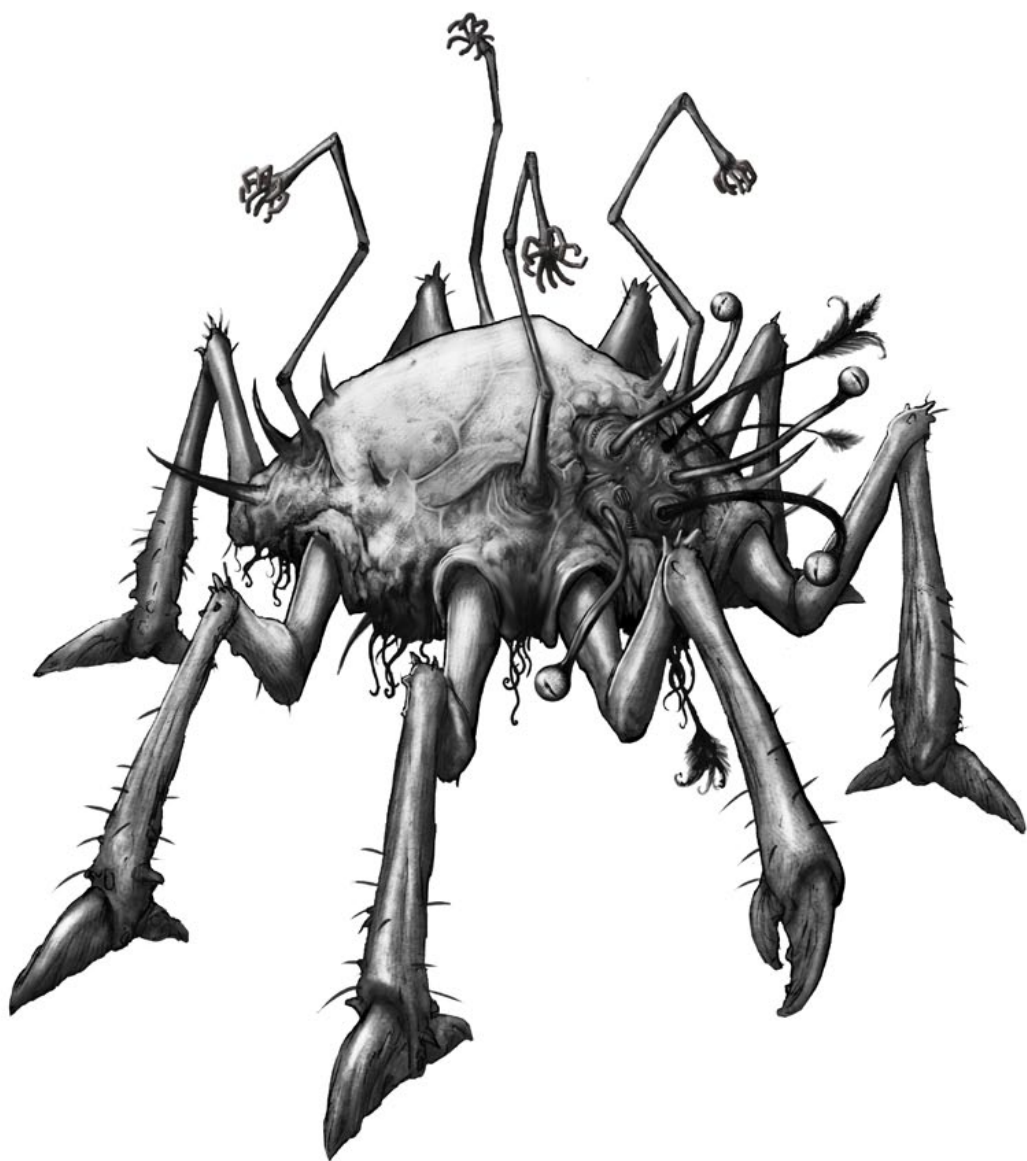
For example, grain is a foodstuff that sells for 500\$ per unit. On a tech level VI world, foodstuffs are in limited supply, so they cost more per unit ( $500\$ \times 1.25 = 625\$$ ), but the demand is no greater than usual, meaning a unit of the same grain sells for standard price per unit.

TABLE 11–12: Supply and Demand

| Tech Level | Trade Code (Supply/Demand) |           |          |          |           |           |          |
|------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
|            | C                          | F         | HT       | LG       | LT        | M         | MT       |
| I          | 1.5/1.0                    | 1.25/1.25 | —/0.95   | 1.5/1.0  | 1.0/1.25  | —/0.95    | —/0.9    |
| II         | 1.25/1.0                   | 1.25/1.25 | —/0.95   | 1.5/1.0  | 0.95/1.25 | —/0.95    | —/0.9    |
| III        | 1.5/1.25                   | 1.0/1.0   | —/1.0    | 1.25/1.0 | 0.95/1.5  | —/1.0     | —/0.95   |
| IV         | 1.25/1.25                  | 1.25/1.0  | —/1.5    | 1.25/1.0 | 1.25/1.0  | 1.25/1.5  | 1.0/1.25 |
| V          | 1.0/1.0                    | 1.0/1.0   | —/1.25   | 1.0/1.0  | 1.0/1.0   | 1.0/1.25  | 0.95/1.0 |
| VI         | 0.95/1.0                   | 1.25/1.0  | 1.0/1.25 | 0.95/1.0 | 0.95/0.95 | 0.95/1.25 | 1.25/1.0 |
| VII        | 0.95/0.9                   | 1.0/0.95  | 0.95/1.0 | 0.9/1.0  | 0.95/0.95 | 0.9/1.0   | 1.0/0.95 |
| VIII       | 0.9/0.9                    | 1.0/0.9   | 0.9/1.0  | 0.9/1.0  | 0.9/0.9   | 0.9/1.0   | 0.9/0.9  |

The chart above is easily altered. Indeed, Game Masters are encouraged to create custom tables that reflect the peculiarities of individual worlds in their campaigns. Likewise, additional modifiers can be employed to affect the supply and demand multipliers, such as population, jumpline location, and local economic factors. Of course, there is no need to introduce such complexities into the system unless the players enjoy the added detail.





A fully mature Inrirot.

# CHAPTER 12: ALIEN LIFE

But the Ythrians were alien, and not just in their society. In their bones, their flesh, the inmost molecules of their genes, they were not human. It was no use pretending otherwise.

"Different" did not necessarily mean "inferior." Could it, heartbreakingly, mean "better"? Or "happier"? Had God been in a more joyful mood when He made the Ythrians than when He made man?

---

— Poul Anderson, "Wingless" (1973)

# CHAPTER 12: ALIEN LIFE

The worlds of the Thousand Suns are teeming with life of all sorts, both sapient and animal. Creating and describing that life is one of the many roles of the Game Master. This chapter provides a simple system to make doing that much easier. As with everything else in *THOUSAND SUNS*, the system is intended to be flexible and easily modified if the GM so wishes. Likewise, the system is intended to serve as an aid in creating exciting adventures rather than as reflective of real world biology and ecology. Game Masters who desire that level of realism are encouraged to alter the guidelines presented here to suit their needs.

## GENERATING ALIENS

Like worlds, alien life is generated through a series of steps, many of which are connected to random tables. These steps are:

1. Basic Form
2. Characteristics (Unintelligent aliens only)
3. Size and Movement
4. Choose Traits

### 1. BASIC FORM

This step determines the fundamental structure of the alien creature, which plays a role in determining its appearance and behavior. Each form provides modifiers to the results generated on Table 12–2. Roll 1D12 on the following table or choose a form according to the needs of the adventure.

TABLE 12–1: Basic Form (1D12)

| Roll | Form         |
|------|--------------|
| 1–2  | Carnivore    |
| 3    | Flier        |
| 4–5  | Herbivore    |
| 6–7  | Invertebrate |
| 8–9  | Omnivore     |
| 10   | Plant        |
| 11   | Scavenger    |
| 12   | Swimmer      |

### CARNIVORE

A carnivorous creature is one that subsists entirely on a diet of meat. As a rule, carnivores are fairly aggressive. They must have a trait, such as Natural Weapon, that grants them an attack of some sort. Pack hunters travel in groups of 6–12 and work as a unit to bring down prey. Solitary hunters travel alone and see others of their own kind as competitors.

Trappers are usually solitary and employ various methods to lure their prey into a situation of which they can take advantage. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

**TABLE 12–2: Carnivore (1D12)**

| Roll  | Form            | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|-------|-----------------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–5   | Pack Hunter     | –1   | –2    | –2 |    |          |
| 6–9   | Solitary Hunter | +1   |       | –1 | +1 | +1       |
| 10–12 | Trapper         | –1   | –1    | –2 |    |          |

## FLIER

A flier is a winged creature of any sort. A flier automatically gains the Wings trait (see *Wings*, p. 229). Most herbivorous fliers congregate in groups of 2D12 or more creatures, while carnivorous fliers tend to be solitary. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

**TABLE 12–3: Flier (1D12)**

| Roll | Form      | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|-----------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Carnivore |      | –2    | –2 | +1 | –1       |
| 7–12 | Herbivore | –1   | –1    | –2 |    | –1       |



A Furoza Kato from Noxind.

# HERBIVORE

An herbivorous creature subsists on a diet of plant matter. Such are much more docile than are carnivores and often travel in large groups. Many possess natural defenses of one sort or another. Dedicated grazers spend most of their time eating, while intermittent grazers spend less time doing so. Dedicated grazers are generally herd animals and are encountered in groups of 2D12 or more, while intermittent grazers can be solitary or herd creatures. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

TABLE 12–4: Herbivore (1D12)

| Roll | Form                | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|---------------------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Dedicated Grazer    | +1   | +2    | +1 | –1 | +1       |
| 7–12 | Intermittent Grazer |      | +1    |    |    |          |

# INVERTEBRATE

An invertebrate is a creature lacking a backbone. Invertebrates are generally simple, soft-bodied organisms, but many invertebrates are complex and possess extensive exoskeletons. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

TABLE 12–5: Invertebrate (1D12)

| Roll | Form      | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|-----------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Carnivore | –3   | –2    | +1 |    | –1       |
| 7–12 | Herbivore | –3   | –1    |    |    | –2       |

# OMNIVORE

An omnivorous creature subsists on a diet of both vegetable and animal matter. Standard omnivores generally have an herbivorous diet but are opportunistic carnivores. Aggressive omnivores are the reverse of standard omnivores, preferring a carnivorous diet that they supplement with plants. Voracious omnivores eat anything they encounter without preference.

TABLE 12–6: Omnivore (1D12)

| Roll | Form       | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|------------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–4  | Aggressive |      |       |    | +1 | +1       |
| 5–8  | Standard   | +2   | +1    | +1 | –1 |          |
| 9–12 | Voracious  | +1   |       |    |    |          |

## PLANT

A plant is a creature that acquires most of the energy needed to live from sunlight, though there are examples of other types of plants, including carnivorous ones. By and large, plants are sessile, which is to say, fixed in one place, though there are exceptions. Roll 1D12. 1–6 = Area Producer, 7–12 = Point Producer. Area producers are widespread plants, like grasses, while point producers are singular plants, like trees. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

**TABLE 12–7: Plant (1D12)**

| Roll | Form      | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|-----------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Carnivore |      |       |    |    |          |
| 7–12 | Herbivore |      |       |    |    |          |

## SCAVENGER

A scavenger is a type of carnivore that subsists on dead or decaying animal matter. Standard scavengers feed on carcasses left behind by other carnivores, while robbing scavengers intimidate other carnivores in order to steal their kills. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

**TABLE 12–8: Scavenger (1D12)**

| Roll | Form     | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|----------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Robbing  | +1   | –1    | +2 |    | +1       |
| 7–12 | Standard | –1   | –2    |    | –1 |          |

## SWIMMER

A swimmer is any creature that spends a good portion of its existence in water and includes both full-time marine creatures as well as amphibians. Fully aquatic creatures move at twice the speed determined on Table 12–2 while underwater and amphibians automatically gain the Gills (see *Gills*, p. 224) and Webbed Digits (see *Webbed Digits*, p. 229) traits. Roll 1D12 to determine exact form.

**TABLE 12–9: Swimmer (1D12)**

| Roll | Form      | Size | Speed | AV | DV | Vitality |
|------|-----------|------|-------|----|----|----------|
| 1–6  | Carnivore | +1   | –2    | –2 | +1 | +1       |
| 7–12 | Herbivore |      | –1    | –2 |    |          |

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of unintelligent aliens are determined using the following table, using the modifiers from the appropriate basic form tables. Modifications are applied on a characteristic by characteristic basis. For example, the GM rolls 1D12 and gets a 5 for the robbing scavenger he is creating. That means he applies a +1 to size (raising it to 60 kg) but

a -1 to speed (changing it to 30m per round). Sapient beings do not use this table, instead relying on the standard method of ability score generation and skill choice presented in earlier chapters.

TABLE 12–10: Abilities (1D12)

| Roll       | Size (KG) | Speed (Meters per round) | AV | DV | Vitality | Unmodified TN | Number of Traits |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|----|----|----------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 or lower | 1         | 50                       | 0  | 1  | 1        | 9             | 1                |
| 2          | 5         | 40                       | 0  | 1  | 5        | 9             | 2                |
| 3          | 10        | 35                       | 0  | 1  | 10       | 8             | 3                |
| 4          | 20        | 30                       | 0  | 1  | 20       | 8             | 2                |
| 5          | 40        | 25                       | 0  | 1  | 30       | 8             | 1                |
| 6          | 60        | 20                       | 0  | 2  | 40       | 7             | 2                |
| 7          | 80        | 15                       | 0  | 2  | 50       | 7             | 3                |
| 8          | 100       | 10                       | 0  | 2  | 60       | 7             | 2                |
| 9          | 150       | 8                        | 5  | 2  | 70       | 7             | 1                |
| 10         | 200       | 7.5                      | 5  | 3  | 80       | 8             | 2                |
| 11         | 300       | 6                        | 10 | 3  | 90       | 8             | 3                |
| 12         | 500       | 5                        | 10 | 3  | 100      | 8             | 2                |
| 13         | 1000      | 4                        | 15 | 4  | 110      | 9             | 1                |
| 14+        | 2000      | 2                        | 15 | 4  | 120      | 9             | 2                |

### 3. CHOOSE TRAITS

Finally, the GM chooses any traits the alien creature possesses, using creation points to do so. A list of common traits follows.

## ALIEN TRAITS

What follows is a list of common traits that can be chosen to give alien creatures unique abilities. For unintelligent aliens, the GM simply selects the number of traits based on the results of Table 12–2. For sapient beings, the cost listed for each trait comes into play. As noted in **Chapter 3** (see *Traits*, p. 40), all Terran characters begin the game with 10 bonus points with which to buy abilities and skills beyond what they receive from their initial allotments. Non-Terran characters sometimes begin the game with fewer bonus points, owing to their traits. This section details a few of the most common traits. In addition, there are a number of traits listed as “drawbacks.” These traits are negative ones that do not provide the alien creature with any benefits but instead limit it in some fashion. Drawbacks grant the characters a number of additional bonus/creation points that may be added to their total.

Game Masters are advised not to create intelligent alien species with more than 10 bonus points worth of traits if he intends for them to be used as potential player characters. If they



are intended solely as NPCs, this advice may be safely ignored. Of course, the GM is free to create player character species with more than 10 points worth of traits if he so wishes. He should remember, though, that such characters may begin the game in a slightly more advantageous position than characters from less “powerful” species. This may not matter in some cases, so take this injunction as it’s intended — as advice and nothing more.

## ACIDIC SALIVA

The creature’s saliva can burn others like acid, increasing the damage value of the creature’s bite by 1. The creature must have a natural bite attack to take this feature. If the creature already possesses the Venomous Bite trait, it cannot also possess Acidic Saliva.

**Cost:** 1

## ARMOR RESTRICTION (DRAWBACK)

The alien’s armor selection is limited. A species with this drawback cannot use standard armor, but instead must use armor specifically crafted for and by members of their own species. In game terms, this means that members of this species can only wear armor that is created by a member of their own species, which increases the standard cost by 25%. Unlike weapons and equipment, the armor restriction drawback means that the character cannot even don the armor if it does not meet these requirements.

**Points Provided:** 4



Skvamaj Birdoj from Narag III.

## ATTACK BONUS

The creature is particularly talented at combat, and gains a bonus to all attack tests. A conditional attack bonus only applies to attacks against a certain type of target (such as members of certain species or faction) or attacks under certain conditions (such as in extreme heat or cold or underwater); this reduces the bonus point cost of the attack bonus to one-half its normal cost, rounded down.

**Cost:** 5 (+1); 10 (+2); 15 (+3)

## ATTACK PENALTY (DRAWBACK)

The creature is less talented at combat. A species with this drawback suffers a penalty to attack tests, either all the time or under certain conditions. A conditional attack penalty only applies against a certain type of target (such as specific creatures) or attacks under certain conditions (such as in extreme heat or cold or in the vacuum of space); this reduces the bonus points provided by the penalty to one-half its normal cost, rounded down.

**Points Provided:** 5 (-1); 10 (-2); 15 (-3)

## BONY SPURS

The creature has part of their body covered by bony spines, quills, or some other type of growth that protects it and causes damage to an attacker that attempts to grapple with it. The damage value for spikes is equal to one-quarter the creature's TN or Body (as appropriate), rounded down.

**Cost:** 1

## BRITTLE BONES (DRAWBACK)

The creature's bones are so weak that they cannot withstand hard or sudden impacts. The creature also takes an additional 1D12 points of damage from any fall greater than 20 meters in height (see *Falling*, p. 100).

**Bonus Points Provided:** 2

## COMBAT FEAR (DRAWBACK)

The creature is gripped by an inexplicable fear whenever facing a dangerous or frightening situation. After Initiative is rolled but before the creature takes its first action in combat, it must make a Will test. If the creature fails the test, it is shaken for the rest of the encounter, taking a -2 penalty on attack and skill tests. If the test succeeds, the creature overcomes its moment of fear and negates the ill effects.

**Points Provided:** 2

## CURIOUS

The creature is intensely interested in new knowledge and experiences and gains a +1 TN to any test it attempts either for the first time or while in pursuit of some knowledge or experiences it has never undertaken before.

**Cost:** 1

## DAMAGE REDUCTION

The creature takes less damage from certain types of attacks, such as cold, heat, or plasma, granting it a permanent armor value against them. The armor value stacks with any armor value gained from other sources.

**Cost:** 1 per 2 AV

## DARK SIGHT

The creature can see in total darkness out to a range of either 20 or 40 meters.

**Cost:** 2 (20 meters); 3 (40 meters)

## ECHOLOCATOR

The creature possesses the ability to absorb sound waves and translate them into mental images that accurately portray the surrounding environment. This ability is similar to a bat's ability to operate and hunt in total darkness via echolocation, resulting in non-visual "sight" to a range of 20 meters.

**Cost:** 3.

## EIDETIC MEMORY

The creature possesses the ability to recall anything it sees or hears with perfect clarity. This includes written text, as well as spoken conversations and images. In addition, the alien may deduct one point from the XP cost of buying new ranks in a skill it already possesses (but not new skills).

**Cost:** 2

## ELASTICITY

The creature is able to bend and twist its body, allowing it to squeeze through very tight spaces. Consequently, the creature can squeeze through an opening or passage one-fifth as wide and tall as its height, in centimeters, although it does so very slowly compared to its normal movement.

**Cost:** 2

## EQUIPMENT RESTRICTION (DRAWBACK)

The creature's equipment selection is limited. This drawback restricts the type of mundane equipment that this alien species can use. A species with the equipment restriction has difficulty using standard equipment or computers and instead must use gear specifically crafted for and by members of their own species. In game terms, this means that members of this species have difficulty using any equipment other than gear that is created by a member of their own species, which increases the standard cost by 25%. If the gear does not meet one of these prerequisites, the character suffers a -4 penalty to any tests made while using the equipment.

**Points Provided:** 4

## EXTRA ARMS

The creature possesses an additional pair of arms, which look and behave exactly like its other arms. As a species with more than two arms, the creature gains a +2 bonus on Athletics (Climb) and Unarmed Combat tests. For the purposes of combat, both extra arms are treated as “off hands” (that is, the creature still has only one primary hand).

**Cost:** 3 (per set of extra arms)

## FRAILITY (DRAWBACK)

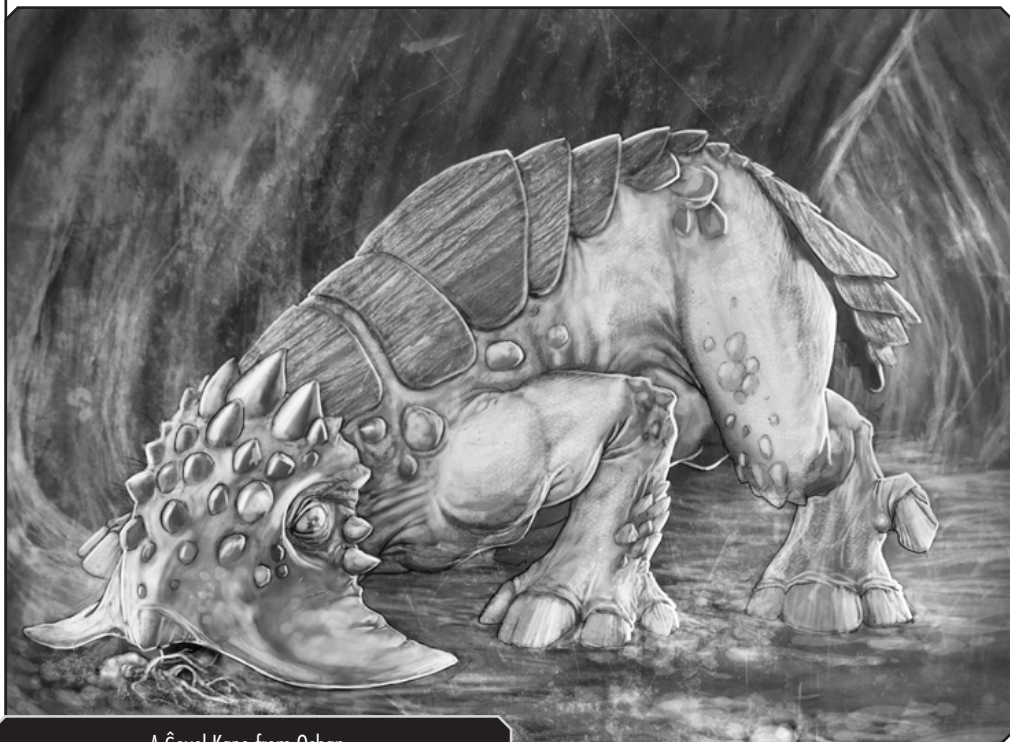
The creature’s body is particularly vulnerable to the ravages of poison, disease, heat, and other ailments. It also has trouble stabilizing when severely wounded. The creature take a –2 penalty on all Body tests, including tests made to heal or stabilize after unconsciousness (but not Body-based skill tests unless the GM rules it is appropriate).

**Points Provided:** 2

## GILLS

The creature possesses a set of gills allowing them to draw oxygen out of water. The gills appear on its neck, chest, or back (near its windpipe or lungs). Consequently, the creature can breathe both air and water and never has to worry about the possibility of drowning. Note: Fully aquatic creatures do not possess this trait.

**Cost:** 1



A Sövel Kapo from Oshan.

## GLIDER

The creature has fleshy flaps allowing it to glide on wind currents. The creature may glide through the air as though flying, but only while descending in altitude. For every 2 meters in altitude that it descends, the creature may move 8 meters horizontally. Thus, if it leaps off a 40-meter tall structure, it may glide horizontally 240 meters.

**Cost:** 2

## HEAT/COLD SUSCEPTIBILITY (DRAWBACK)

The creature's body does not react well to particularly hot or cold temperatures. The creature takes double damage from prolonged exposure to extreme heat or cold.

**Points Provided:** 1

## HYPERSENSITIVITY

The creature is particularly sensitive to its surroundings. It gains a +2 bonus on any Perception-based tests that benefit from sensory input.

**Cost:** 2

## LEAPER

The creature gains the ability to leap incredible distances. The creature gains a +5 bonus on all Athletics (Jump) tests or any other tests where the GM rules that this trait has bearing.

**Cost:** 1

## LETHARGY (DRAWBACK)

The creature has trouble reacting quickly to danger. Consequently, it suffers a -2 TN to all Dexterity-based tests.

**Points Provided:** 3

## LIGHT SENSITIVITY (DRAWBACK)

The creature's eyes are unable to adjust to bright light. Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight) blinds the creature for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, the creature suffers a -1 TN on attacks and Perception-based tests as long as it remains in the affected area.

**Points Provided:** 1

## LOW-LIGHT VISION

The creature's eyes can see in minimal light. It can see twice as far as normal in starlight, moonlight, or under artificial illumination, such as portable glow-lamp.

**Cost:** 1

## MINDSLAVE (DRAWBACK)

The creature has certain mental deficiencies that make it harder to resist mind-influencing effects. It suffers a -2 TN on all Will and Resist tests to avoid mental effects.

**Points Provided:** 1

## NATURAL ARMOR

The creature possesses some type of natural armor that makes it harder to injure. The creature gains an armor value that function exactly like other types of artificial armor. However, the natural armor does not stack with any other type of armor. The effects of this trait stack with those gained from Table 12–2.

**Cost:** 1 per 2 points of AV (maximum 20)

## NATURAL WEAPON

This trait grants the species a natural weapon that can be used even when the alien is unarmed. Natural weapons come in many varieties: bite, claw, tail slap, slam, and so forth. When this trait is selected, choose a single type of natural weapon as well as its damage value. Though the type of natural attack does not affect the cost, the damage value does. In cases where it is logical to have two or more natural attacks (such as claws on each hand), each natural attack must be paid for individually. Otherwise, it is simply assumed that the natural attack represents both parts of a pair used in unison. The effects of this trait stack with those gained from Table 12–2 (see *Table 12–2: Carnivore*, p. 217).

**Cost:** 1 per point of DV (maximum 5)

## PHEROMONE ATTRACTION

The alien can regulate the production of pheromones in its body and release them at will, altering the moods of other nearby creatures. The creature gains a +2 bonus on all social interaction tests made against creatures within 10 meters of it. The GM may rule that any such creature's biology is too different from the alien's and thus immune to the effects of this trait

**Cost:** 3

## PHEROMONE REPULSION (DRAWBACK)

The alien releases pheromones that other creatures find repulsive. The alien takes a –2 TN on all social interaction tests made against creatures within 10 meters of it. The alien cannot have this drawback and the Pheromone Attraction trait (see above)

**Points Provided:** 1

## PREHENSILE TAIL

The creature possesses a tail that can grasp and hold objects. A prehensile tail grants a +2 TN to Acrobatics tests. It can also grasp and manipulate a small, simple object. A prehensile tail cannot be used to operate a piece of equipment that requires opposable digits or fine motor control (such as a computer). An creature can hang from its prehensile tail indefinitely by wrapping it around a larger object, thereby freeing up its other limbs. The prehensile tail isn't dexterous or strong enough to fire ranged weapons or make melee attacks, however.

Creatures cannot possess both a Prehensile Tail and the Tail trait (see p. 228).

**Cost:** 2



## SCENT

The creature possesses an acute sense of smell allowing them to track prey with ease. Creatures with this ability are able to smell an opponent within 15 meters. If upwind, the distance is doubled, if downwind the distance is halved. The range can be increased for each additional point spent.

**Cost:** 2 (+1 point per 5 additional meters, maximum 30 meters total)

## SKILL BONUS

The creature is more adept at certain skills. This trait gives the species a bonus to skill tests. This bonus can apply only under certain conditions (such as only on starships or while in combat). The cost usually depends on the skill bonus provided, but a conditional skill bonus can either apply to multiple skills or reduce the bonus point cost of one skill. If the skill bonus only applies under certain conditions, the GM may select three skills for that bonus to apply to instead of the normal one skill. Alternately, the conditional skill bonus may apply to only one skill but halves the bonus point cost (rounded up, minimum of 1) of the skill bonus.

**Cost:** 2 per +1 (maximum +3)

## SKILL PENALTY (DRAWBACK)

The creature is less adept at certain skills. This feature gives the species a penalty to skill tests. This penalty can apply only under certain conditions (such as only on starships or while in combat). The bonus points provided usually depend on the skill bonus provided, but a conditional skill penalty can either apply to multiple skills or reduce the bonus points provided by one skill. If the skill penalty only applies under certain conditions, you may select three skills for that penalty to apply to instead of the normal one skill. Alternately, the conditional skill penalty may apply to only one skill but halves the bonus points provided (rounded up, minimum of 1) by the skill penalty.

**Points Provided:** 2 per -1 (maximum -3)



A Mamuta Fišo from Khorkalon.



## SPEED

The creature is fast, giving them the ability to chase an opponent down, or make them quicker to react. A creature with this trait gain a +1 to its Initiative Rating and its movement is doubled.

**Cost:** 4

## TAIL

The creature possesses a thick tail. The tail may be fur-covered, slender and whip-like, or scaly like a lizard's. Although the tail improves the creature's balance and can serve as a weapon, it cannot be used for gripping objects. The tail provides a +2 TN to all Acrobatics tests. A creature that already has the Prehensile Tail feature cannot gain this trait. This trait can be used in conjunction with the Natural Weapon trait to represent a stinger or barbed or spiked tail.

**Cost:** 1

## THICK FUR COAT

The creature possesses a thick, protective layer of fur over its body. The creature gains a +4 TN on tests against extreme cold temperatures. A species with fur, scales, or chitin cannot gain this trait.

**Cost:** 1

## ULTRA IMMUNE SYSTEM

The creature possesses a powerful immune system capable of repelling many poisons, diseases, and radiation sickness. The alien gains a +2 TN on all Body tests to resist the effects of poisons, diseases, or radiation.

**Cost:** 1

## VENOMOUS BITE

The creature's natural bite attack injects poison into its victim's bloodstream. Any opponent the creature successfully hits with its bite attack must make a successful opposed Body test against its attack or take poison damage equal to the degree of success (in addition to the amount from the bite itself). The creature must have a natural bite attack to gain the benefit of this feature. The creature cannot possess this trait if it already has the Acidic Saliva trait.

**Cost:** 2

## WALL CRAWLER

The creature can walk walls and cling to ceilings like a spider. It has tiny barbs on its hands and feet to facilitate climbing, and its fingers and toes secrete a transparent adhesive that lets the creature cling to smooth surfaces. As long as the creature's hands and feet are uncovered, it can climb perfectly smooth, flat, vertical surfaces. In addition, the creature gains a +3 TN on all Athletics (Climb) tests. Wearing gloves or footwear reduces the bonus to +1 TN, and wearing both gloves and footwear negates the bonus entirely.

The creature also gains a +3 TN on Athletics tests when moving across a slippery surface. Wearing any kind of footwear negates this bonus.

**Cost:** 1

## WEAK IMMUNE SYSTEM (DRAWBACK)

The creature's body has difficulty preventing infections from entering its system, and thus it is prone to sickness and disease. The creature suffers -2 TN on all Body tests to resist the effects of poison, disease, and sickness. The creature cannot possess both this and the Ultra Immune System trait.

**Points Provided:** 1

## WEBBED DIGITS

The creature possesses webbing between its fingers or toes and can move more easily through liquids. The creature gains +3 TN on all Athletics (Swim) tests. Having webbed digits does not interfere with the creature's ability to grasp or manipulate objects.

**Cost:** 1

## WINGS

The creature possesses a pair of birdlike or bat-like wings. The creature's wings grant a natural fly speed equal to twice its ground speed.

**Cost:** 3

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once created, the GM must describe the alien creature's physical appearance and behavior, as well as finding a place for it within a world's ecology. The GM can look to the real world for examples of different types of creatures and use them as inspiration when creating alien animals and plants. Of course, many worlds have environments and conditions quite unlike anything on Terra. In such cases, only imagination will do, perhaps augmented by the speculations of science fiction authors.



A Naval Infantry trooper alone in the jungles of Verda.

# CHAPTER 13: ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

*"There's but a thin line between many an enemy and many a friend," Bijaz said, "Where that line stops, there's no beginning and no end."*

*— Frank Herbert, Dune Messiah (1969)*

# CHAPTER 13: ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

## GENERIC NPCs

The vast majority of non-player characters in a campaign are “generic,” which is to say, they serve a fairly limited purpose and do not require a high degree of detail. Indeed, many NPCs might not even require game statistics at all, such as an alien street vendor hawking exotic wares or a beleaguered receptionist at a corporate headquarters. For those that *do* require game statistics, this section provides a goodly selection of the most common types encountered during adventures.

All of the generic NPCs provided in this section are Terrans, but they can easily be made members of other species simply by shifting around a few abilities and skills to bring them in line with what’s presented in **Chapter 3**. Likewise, many of the NPCs’ skills do not include specializations, in order to make them more easily customizable. It is hoped that GMs will find it very easy to modify and adapt these NPCs by adding or subtracting skills and skill ranks as needed to create a wide variety of non-player characters for any campaign.

### ARISTOCRAT

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 10 ■ Will 9 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Bargain 5, Bureaucracy 7, Computers 0, Culture (Terran) 8, Diplomacy 9, Empathy 7, Gaming 4, Intimidation 7, Language (Lingua Terra) 6, Language (Other) 4, Observe 6, Performance 4, Resist 4, Socialize 9, Social Sciences 4, Vehicle Operation 4.

**Gear:** Display glasses, mark III personal energy shield, *Metropola* ground car, šafisto chip, universal communicator.

An “aristocrat” is any wealthy and influential individual, regardless of whether or not he possesses a noble title. In general, aristocrats expect deference from others of “lower” station and behave accordingly.

### BOUNTY HUNTER

**Body 10 ■ Dexterity 8 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 7 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Bargain 5, Culture (Terran) 2, Intimidation 6, Intrusion 5, Investigation (Criminal) 6, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Language (Other) 2, Melee 3, Observe 6, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 5, Shoot 8, Stealth (Shadowing) 6, Streetwise (Contacts) 6, Subterfuge 6, Survival 2, Tactics 3, Technical Sciences 0, Unarmed Combat 6.

**Gear:** 18 mm shotgun, blaster pistol, duracable, fast use medkit, light combat armor, tangler gun, vibroblade, viziero.

Though officially empowered by the State to apprehend wanted criminals, bounty hunters themselves are often little better than their quarry. Unlike regular law enforcers, they are less likely to respect legal niceties, especially when there’s a large sum of money to be made from their current assignment.

## DIPLOMAT

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 5 ■ Perception 9 ■ Presence 10 ■ Will 10 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Bargain 8, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 2, Diplomacy 9, Culture (Other) 3, Culture (Other) 2, Culture (Terran) 3, Empathy 8, Intimidation 7, Investigation 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 3, Language (Other) 2, Language (Other) 2, Observe 7, Performance (Oratory) 4, Profession (Diplomat) 6, Resist 2, Socialize (State Dinners) 4, Social Sciences 4, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Display contacts, polyvox, universal communicator.

Diplomats prefer to avoid violence, if at all possible. Indeed, their entire profession is predicated on finding mutually agreeable solutions to a wide variety of problems. Consequently, diplomats can be formidable allies or opponents, depending on one's point of view.

## ESPO

**Body 7 ■ Dexterity 7 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 10 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Athletics 5, Body Control 5, Combat Sense 6, Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 5, Precognition 3, Profession (ESPO) 5, Shoot 6, Stealth 4, Tactics 4, Telekinesis 6, Telekinetic Blast 6, Telekinetic Shield 6, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, fast use medkit, laser rifle, medium combat armor, power backpack.

An ESPO is a specially trained soldier adept in the use of psi to augment his other skills. Most militaries in the Thousand Suns include a cadre of these espers.

## FREE TRADER

**Body 6 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 9 ■ Presence 8 ■ Will 7 ■ Vitality 30**

**Skills:** Bargain (Trade) 8, Bureaucracy 7, Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 4, Culture (Other) 3, Diplomacy (Negotiation) 7, Empathy 7, Gaming 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 4, Language (Other) 2, Medical Sciences 2, Observe 6, Piloting 4, Profession (Trader) 6, Socialize 7, Space Sciences 6, Streetwise 5, Technical Sciences 5, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display contacts, flight suit, polyvox, universal communicator.

Independent merchants can be found throughout the Thousand Suns, on nearly every world. Most are honest traders looking only to make a living among the stars, but some are disreputable swindlers not above trickery and deceit.

## JOURNALIST

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 5 ■ Perception 10 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 9 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Bargain 8, Bureaucracy 5, Computers 5, Culture (Terran) 2, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 7, Empathy 6, Intimidation 6, Intrusion 4, Investigation 8, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Observe 8, Profession (Journalist) 6, Socialize 6, Social Sciences 6, Streetwise (Contacts) 7, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Display contacts, hologram recorder, universal communicator.

Though news travels slowly across the Thousand Suns, there's still a place for the journalist, reporting on current events across hundreds of worlds and transmitting their stories for the elucidation of others. Journalists are often persistent and meddlesome, especially when they smell a juicy story.



## LAW ENFORCER

**Body 8 ■ Dexterity 7 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 8 ■ Will 6 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Athletics 5, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy (Legal) 2, Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 6, Investigation (Criminal) 5/6, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Observe 4, Profession (Law Enforcer) 4, Resist 2, Shoot 6, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display glasses, light combat armor.

Though interstellar authority is weak among the Thousand Suns, all but the most anarchic worlds have some form of local law enforcement. These individuals have their work cut out for them, particularly on planets where lots of offworlders visit.

## NAVAL INFANTRY TROOPER

**Body 8 ■ Dexterity 8 ■ Perception 6 ■ Presence 7 ■ Will 7 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 3, Athletics 5, Bureaucracy (Military) 2, Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 5, Dodge 5, Heavy Weapons 3, Intimidation 4, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 4, Profession (Marine) 3, Shoot 6, Socialize (Carousing) 1, Survival 3, Tactics 5, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 4.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, fast use medkit, laser rifle, medium combat armor, power backpack.

Popularly known as Marines, Naval Infantry troopers are respected and feared for their dedication and skill in battle. Though primarily found aboard naval vessels, they are also encountered as guards at ground-based installations with a significant naval presence.

## THE NAVAL OFFICER

**Body 6 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 9 ■ Will 8 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 4, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy (Military) 3, Computers 6, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 4, Diplomacy (Leadership) 6, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Gaming 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 3, Piloting 5, Profession (Navy) 6, Shoot 5, Space Sciences 7, Tactics 9, Technical Sciences 7, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display contacts, mark III personal energy shield, universal communicator.

In the Thousand Suns, when people think of a military officer, they're usually thinking of a naval officer. Disciplined and often imperious, naval officers represent the best and worst the military have to offer.

## REBEL

**Body 7 ■ Dexterity 7 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 6 ■ Will 9 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Bargain 6, Computers 2, Defend 6, Dodge 6, Empathy 7, Intrusion 3, Observe 6, Resist 2, Shoot 6, Social Sciences 4, Socialize 4, Stealth 5, Streetwise 7, Subterfuge 6, Survival 6, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 6, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, fast use medkit, hologuise.

Some say that one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist. This rebel is a zealot, willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his cause's political ends, even give up his own life if necessary.



## SCIENTIST

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 5 ■ Perception 12 ■ Presence 6 ■ Will 8 ■ Vitality 30**

**Skills:** Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 5, Computers 8, Culture (Terran) 2, Diplomacy 7, Investigation (Research) 7, Language (Lingua Terra) 3, Language (Czanik) 2, Observe 9, Physical Sciences 8, Profession (Scientist) 6, Resist 2, Socialize 6, Space Sciences 7, Technical Sciences 5, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Display glasses, karto, neural computer link, spray LCD.

The scope of scientific research has increased manyfold since the discovery of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map. Unsurprisingly, scientists of all stripes can be found throughout the Thousand Suns, puzzling out both age-old mysteries and newer conundrums.

## SPACER

**Body 7 ■ Dexterity 9 ■ Perception 9 ■ Presence 6 ■ Will 6 ■ Vitality 30**

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 8, Computers 6, Culture (Terran 2), Engineering (D-Drive) 7, Gaming 4, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Observe 8, Physical Sciences (Mathematics) 7, Piloting 7, Profession (Starship Crew) 7, Space Sciences (Astrogation) 7, Technical Sciences (Electronics) 9.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display glasses, flight suit, karto, sensor (mechanicomp), space suit, viziero.

Spacers are Terrans who were born, grow up, and work in space, whether aboard a starship, a space station, or some other artificial structure. They can be found all across the Thousand Suns, in a wide variety of occupations, but most make their livings as starship crew members.

## SPECIFIC NPCs

The following six non-player characters are all unique individuals, complete with brief backgrounds and personality descriptions. They are intended to be used as potential allies or antagonists for the characters, although, with a little modification, they could easily serve as starting characters as well.

### JAN DELORADO

**Body 9 ■ Dexterity 7 ■ Perception 6 ■ Presence 9 ■ Will 8 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 3, Computers 0, Culture (Terran) 2, Defend 4, Dodge 1, Empathy (Lies) 2, Heavy Weapons 1, Intrusion 4, Intimidation 5, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 1, Melee 3, Observe 4, Profession (Army) 2, Profession (Criminal) 4, Shoot (Energy Pistols) 6, Socialize (Carousing) 2, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4, Survival (City) 1, Tactics 2, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat (Brawling) 5, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display glasses, mark III personal energy shield, monoblade. universal communicator.

Jan Delorado grew up impoverished on Meridian. Rather than join a strato gang like many of his friends, Delorado planned to enter the Army as the first step toward improving his situation. He enlisted at 18, hoping to find excitement. Instead, he found himself pulling garrison duty on a decadent Core World, providing him with plenty of opportunities to turn

some sols illicitly, whether by appropriating and selling military hardware or using his new skills as an enforcer and hit man. Discharged from the Army, he continued his dubious trade as a thug for hire, working for a variety of criminal bosses. Known as *La Orulo*, “the Golden Boy,” for his long blond hair and expensive tastes, Delorado is now a well known figure in the underworld of the Core and a dangerous opponent if crossed.

## CAPTAIN LUCIA HORVATH

**Body 6 ■ Dexterity 7 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 9 ■ Will 7 ■ Vitality 30**

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 4, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy (Military) 3, Computers 6, Defend 4, Diplomacy (Leadership) 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation 5, Medical Sciences (First Aid) 2, Melee 3, Piloting 5, Profession (Navy) 6, Shoot 5, Space Sciences 5, Tactics 8, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display contacts, mark III personal energy shield, universal communicator.

Commanding officer of the strike cruiser *Kurağa*, Captain Lucia Horvath is renowned for two things: her unswerving loyalty to the State and her willingness to bend the rules to the breaking point in pursuit of its enemies. In the years since she assumed command, Horvath has been decorated and reprimanded with almost equal regularity. Of late, she has been particularly concerned about the ability of individuals committing crimes and mayhem on one world to flee to another in order to evade punishment for their misdeeds. For that reason, she has been keeping a careful eye on any unusual starships entering her vessel’s patrol area — and their passengers.

## MAKSIMA JIONG

**Body 5 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 7 ■ Presence 5 ■ Will 8 ■ Vitality 30**

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 1, Combat Sense 4, Computers 2, Defend 6, Diplomacy (Persuasion) 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Intrusion 4, Investigation 2, Melee 3, Mental Contact 4, Mind Reading 3, Observe 3, Profession (ESPO) 3, Profession (Spy) 2, Resist 4, Shoot 6, Stealth 5, Streetwise 2, Tactics 4, Teleperception 5, Unarmed Combat 6, Vehicle Operation 2

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display contacts, hologuise, morphic disguise kit, šteleco suit, viziero.

Maksima Jiong was trained as a psychic spy by some agency of the Terran State — no one is sure which one. By all accounts, she was very good at what she did, equally adept at using her psi powers to ferret out secrets as she was in using them to eliminate her opposition. Then, for reasons unknown, she left the employ of the State and began to offer her services to anyone willing to pay her exorbitant fees. Jiong is still every bit as good as she was in her government days, but she’s a lot more willing to ruffle feathers to get the job done, making her, if anything, even *more* dangerous.

## KVENTINO NAVARE

**Body 6 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 8 ■ Presence 8 ■ Will 10 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Bargain (Charm) 7, Bureaucracy (Business) 6, Computers 0, Culture (Terran) 3, Culture (Czanik) 2, Culture (Hen Jaa) 2, Diplomacy (Negotiation) 7, Empathy 6, Gaming 3, Intimidation 4, Language (Lingua Terra) 3, Language (Ja Haa Len) 3, Observe 5, Piloting 2, Profession (Trader) 5, Shoot 4, Socialize 8, Space Sciences (Astrogation) 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 5.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, display contacts, flight suit, polyvox, universal communicator.

Kventino Navare is a scion of a wealthy Core Worlds family fallen on hard times. After the death of his father, he inherited a large number of debts that could only be paid off by selling everything left to him except a fast freighter he rechristened *The Uncertain Prince*. Eager to earn money and one day reclaim his place in Core Worlds society, Captain Navare (as he now calls himself) set out for Wildspace, looking for opportunities to enrich himself. Thus far, he's been more successful than he imagined but has still fallen short of his dream. He continues to ply the jumplines in search of his "big score."

## NUK NAAK RULASH

**Body 9 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 8 ■ Presence 8 ■ Will 7 ■ Vitality 40**

**Skills:** Acrobatics (Zero-G) 3, Athletics 2, Bargain 4, Computers 2, Culture (Kriilkna) 2, Defend 5, Diplomacy (Leadership) 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Intrusion 2, Language (Kuumen) 2, Melee 5, Piloting 4, Profession (Pirate) 5, Shoot 5, Space Sciences 6, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5, Tactics 4, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 5.

**Gear:** Blaster pistol, light combat armor, vibroblade.

The Kriilkna has a long history of fractiousness and piracy against their own kind. Only since the Civil War have these alien beings turned to preying on the Terrans, whose retaliation they previously had feared. One of the species's more successful pirate leaders is Nuk Naak Rulash, who commands several starships that raid transport vessels along the borders between the Terran and Kriilkna states. His attacks are becoming ever bolder and his targets larger. Some believe it is only a matter of time before Nuk Naak Rulash turns his gaze upon Terran outposts and colonies in the same area.

## SHIYIN REN

**Body 6 ■ Dexterity 6 ■ Perception 12 ■ Presence 6 ■ Will 8 ■ Vitality 35**

**Skills:** Bargain 4, Computers 8, Culture (Hen Jaa) 2, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 5, Investigation 5, Language (Ja Haa Len) 2, Life Sciences (Biology) 6, Medical Sciences 11, Observe 8, Profession (Doctor) 6, Resist 6, Technical Sciences 4.

**Gear:** Advanced medkit, medicomp, polyvox, regen wand, universal communicator, viziero, wireless neural computer jack.

Shiyin Ren is a Hen Jaa medical researcher specializing in the development of new and more deadly biological agents to use against Terrans and their allies. In order to perform his research, he operates in the field on human-occupied worlds in Wildspace and, it is rumored, isolated parts of the Marches. More than one outbreak of a mysterious pathogen has been attributed to this Hen Jaa mastermind. Ren is currently much sought after by agents of the State, while the Hegemony officially disavows his activities and claims he is a renegade acting without sanction.



From opera to grav ball, the Core Worlds have it all.

# CHAPTER 14: META-SETTING

"What was the use of this struggle to keep a decaying civilization from being eaten alive, if you never got a chance at any of the decadence yourself?"

— Poul Anderson, "The Game of Glory" (1958)

# CHAPTER 14: META-SETTING

While *THOUSAND SUNS* is intended as a toolkit for constructing an Imperial SF setting of one's own, not everyone has the time or inclination to create an entire futuristic setting. That's why this chapter presents what is known as the *meta-setting*. A meta-setting is a flexible outline of a setting, in which certain details have been provided, along with lots of "blank spaces," and whose final shape and content is entirely up to each Game Master. Another way to look at it is to think of the meta-setting as a large canvas onto which certain shapes and figures have already been drawn, but whose colors, shading, and fine details are left entirely up to individual GMs.

This chapter presents a broad science fiction setting in a portion of the Milky Way galaxy inhabited by Terran humans and numerous other intelligent species. Certain elements of this broad setting are drawn in sharper relief than others, such as key historical events, alien species, and interstellar organizations, while others are drawn more faintly, so that the GM can choose either to embolden them or "paint over" them according to his own vision of the meta-setting. The meta-setting is thus meant to be an aid to one's creativity rather than a replacement for it. To use yet another metaphor, it's like a guidebook that points out lots of interesting sights to see but whether one visits any particular sight, let alone spends a lot of time there, remains one's own decision.

All *THOUSAND SUNS* supplements make use of the meta-setting, but, like this rulebook, the meta-setting is presented simply as an example intended to spur the imagination rather than as an official setting that all GMs are expected to employ. Imperial SF literature is diverse and encompasses many different approaches, even if they share certain commonalities, such as those discussed in **Chapter 10** (starting on p. 184). The meta-setting is a distillation of those commonalities into a flexible superstructure that each GM can shape to suit his interests and on which he can hang a wide variety of science fictional elements. The meta-setting is the raw material from which the GM can craft his own vision of the future.

In the same vein, the meta-setting includes no important non-player characters or grand plots. This book assumes that the most important people in any campaign are the players' characters and the grandest plots are the ones created through actual play. This probably isn't literally true. If the characters in a campaign are a bunch of down on their luck mercenaries in the Marches or intrepid explorers in Wildspace, they probably aren't as important politically as His Imperial Majesty, Rodriko III, emperor of the Thousand Suns or as important scientifically as D-Drive researchers on Olympus Prime. From the perspective of *one's own campaign*, though, those mercenaries or explorers are more important than the emperor or famous scientists, because they are the "stars" of an ongoing series of adventures. The campaign is about them and the GM should never forget this.

## HISTORY

The Thousand Suns meta-setting takes place in Year 500 of the Nova Kalendaro (or New Calendar, also sometimes called the Muelisto Calendar, after its creator), the timekeeping system established at the signing of the Concord, whose date was designated Year 0. All dates

prior to that point are presented with a minus sign (–) to indicate how many years prior to the Concord they took place. Thus, ten years before the Concord is represented as –10.

The brief timeline shown in the boxed text below includes very few specific dates and the those it does include are all comparatively recent. Everything else is left open for individual GMs to customize as they wish. One should therefore feel free to add as many or as few historical events to this timeline as one wishes: wars, economic booms or downturns, scientific discoveries, religious awakenings – whatever suits one’s personal vision of the meta-setting.

As stated above, all dates use Year 0 as their reference point. Nowhere in this book or elsewhere is it be established when Year 0 is in relation to the present day, so Year 500 might equally plausibly correspond to 3000 A.D. or 30,000 A.D. — it’s up to each Game Master to decide. Each entry below includes a brief “Notes” section that explains the purpose of each entry in the timeline from a world design point of view. With this information, a GM can better understand the entry, as well as the consequences for omitting or altering it in one’s own version of the meta-setting. The notes are thus an aid to the creative process and another means of adding to the meta-setting’s flexibility and modularity.

| timeline of the future |                                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Date                   | Event                               |
|                        | The Thirty-Hour War                 |
|                        | Discovery of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map |
|                        | D-Drive Invented                    |
|                        | The Vojaĝanto Expedition            |
|                        | First Contact                       |
|                        | Foundation of the Terran Federation |
|                        | Von Neumann’s War                   |
|                        | The Gene War                        |
|                        | The Wars of Independence            |
|                        | The Age of Warring States           |
| 0                      | The Concord                         |
| 471–479                | The Civil War                       |
| 500                    | The Present Day                     |

## THE THIRTY-HOUR WAR

The Thirty-Hour War was a worldwide political, military, and economic conflict that devastated the nations and environment of Terra’s northern hemisphere and threw the entire planet into a decades-long chaos. The conflict was so named because, according to popular accounts of the time, the opposing military forces all suffered such grievous casualties within thirty hours of the formal commencement of hostilities that continuation of the war after that point was all but impossible. But the damage had already been done. While such accounts are undoubtedly an immense exaggeration, there is no question that the Thirty-Hour War forever changed the face of Terra and the destiny of the human race.

**Notes:** The Thirty-Hour War likely occurred far enough in the past of the setting that few people know about or indeed care about its specifics. This historical event is nevertheless significant because it establishes a break point between the civilization that exists today and the one from which Terra’s interstellar civilization springs. The most obvious evidence of



this is *Lingua Terra*, which is a mixture of English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Afrikaans. If the GM wishes to flavor his version of the meta-setting with a different culture or cultures, a major war or catastrophe in the past is a good way to rationalize the rise of a new culture to replace a formerly prominent one.

## DISCOVERY OF THE DANE-OHLMHORST MAP

An artifact of the extinct extraterrestrial culture later dubbed the Travelers (see p. 253), the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map was in fact a complex navigational computer whose partially intact memory core contained the coordinates for over 1000 star systems. It was not until the invention of the D-Drive nearly a century later that these coordinates could actually be used, by which point those same star systems came to be known colloquially as “the Thousand Suns” in poet Johane Coelho’s poetic phrase.

**Notes:** The Map is named for the two researchers who discovered it. In the standard version of the meta-setting, the Map was discovered at a Traveler site on Mars, but it could just as easily be found anywhere else in the solar system, including Terra itself, particularly if the GM wishes to imply a greater involvement of the Travelers in human history.

## D-DRIVE INVENTED

The invention of the Dillingham Drive (named for its inventor Arturo Dillingham) is the foundational event of the interstellar era, without which none of what followed would have been possible.

**Notes:** The D-Drive is the only type of FTL drive existing in the Thousand Suns setting, making its invention of prime importance. In a setting with more than one type of FTL drive, this event might still be importance, but likely not to the same degree.

## VOJAĜANTO EXPEDITION

The Vojaĝanto Expedition was the first successful use of the D-Drive to travel to another star system. Thanks to a correct interpretation of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map, this star system contained a Terran-compatible planet, which was named *Espero* by the captain of the Vojaĝanto and soon became a hub from which countless other expeditions along the jumplines of the Thousand Suns was launched.

**Notes:** The name *Vojaĝanto*, like the name *Espero*, is in the artificial language Esperanto, which stands in for Terra *Lingua* throughout this book. If the culture from a GM’s version of the meta-setting evolves is different, he might wish to change these names. The *Espero* system is the oldest continuously inhabited system outside of the Sol system and, as such, an important place in the Thousand Suns – the equivalent of San Salvador or Plymouth Rock. See *Appendix A: Lingua Terra*, p. 269 for more information.

## FIRST CONTACT

Humanity’s first contact with an intelligent species occurred when Terran starships encountered their Czanik counterparts. The two species immediately got along well and a bond of friendship was formed that has lasted ever since. Though the two races do not always see eye to eye, there is no question that they are inseparable companions as they explore the stars.

**Note:** First contact is a civilization-changing moment for the Terrans. Likewise, the alliance between them and the Czanik is an important pillar of the meta-setting. Should a GM’s version of the meta-setting either not include the Czanik or a different species

in their place, it has very significant consequences for the setting as a whole and how its history might have unfolded.

## FOUNDATION OF THE TERRAN FEDERATION

As humanity spread among the Thousand Suns, the need for a unified interstellar government became apparent. The Terran Federation, later called the Old Federation, met this need. Initially, the Federation was a loose body whose responsibilities were few, primarily defense and the regulation of trade. Over the centuries, the Federation grew ever more powerful, centralized, and, according to some, authoritarian — tendencies that sparked the Wars of Independence, as system after system seceded from the Federation and sparked two centuries of sporadic warfare, economic disruption, and societal decline.

**Note:** The Old Federation serves several purposes in the meta-setting. It is at once a mythical “Golden Age” when Terran civilization was at its peak and cautionary example of civilizational hubris. People in Year 500 look back on the Old Federation with equal parts awe and loathing. Think of it as the Roman Empire of the meta-setting, for good and for ill. In addition, the Old Federation is the origin for most of the human clades that exist in the game — and just about any other technological terror the GM wishes to add to his campaign, as it was a time of unfettered scientific tinkering without regard for morality or common sense.

## THE VON NEUMANN WARS

A perfect example of the kinds of mistakes the Old Federation made, the Von Neumann Wars were a series of conflicts between Terran forces and artificially intelligent machines, including automated starships and military vessels. The conflicts ended in a victory for humanity, with the destruction of most — but not all — of the AIs. The survivors fled into Wildspace, where, even now, they are rumored to plot the downfall of their organic creators. The wars left a deep scar on the Terran psyche. Since then, most Terrans have not felt comfortable with the widespread use of robots or AIs of any kind, even in non-military applications. Those few that do exist tend to be employed in limited capacities where they are deemed least likely to cause trouble. Artificially intelligent machines are also treated with suspicion and, while not legally banned in the Thousand Suns, they are rare to the point of non-existence. That the Hen Jaa have no such qualms only adds to the sinister light in which these aliens are viewed.

**Note:** The Von Neumann Wars are, of course, named after the early computer theorist John von Neumann (1903–1957), who, among many other achievements, proposed the development of self-replicating spacecraft. Ever since, the notion of a machine capable of building copies of itself has been called a “Von Neumann machine.” The Von Neumann Wars represents the Old Federation’s flirtation with artificially intelligent weapons of war and it provides an explanation as to why intelligent robots and androids are rarities in the setting.

## THE GENE WAR

Following the debacle of the Von Neumann Wars, the Old Federation turned increasingly to genetic engineering of human beings to replace robots. This resulted in the creation of numerous human sub-species (or clades), including the widely known Myrmidons and the Delphic (see **Chapter 3**, starting on p. 38). Over time, these clades proved themselves invaluable to the functioning of the Old Federation, a weakness that the Myrmidons exploited. The result was the Gene War, a rebellion instigated by several Myrmidon military units that grew to engulf the entire Federation. As they had in the Von Neumann Wars, the Terrans

triumphed but at great cost and the rot within the Old Federation, both political and moral, was laid bare.

**Note:** Like the Von Neumann Wars, the Gene War provides an explanation for why genetic engineering is undeveloped and rare in the Thousand Suns. Of course, the GM is free to include whatever genetically engineered races and species he wishes, since the Old Federation freely dabbled in this area before the Gene War revealed its folly.

## THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

The Gene War delivered a mortal blow to the Old Federation, as individual worlds and even entire sectors recognized its weakness and made bids for independence from the tottering interstellar government. Racked by political and financial crises and rent with brushfire wars and insurrections, the Federation would soldier on for centuries more but it would be a shadow of its former glory. With each decade, it grew more insular and xenophobic, eventually succumbing to civilizational senescence, which ushered in a new era of galactic barbarism.

**Note:** This period represents the last gasp of the Old Federation and its echoes resonate still in the Thousand Suns, as worlds recover from the Civil War a generation ago. Many worlds and governments seceded from the Federation at this time and GMs wishing to provide an origin for them can easily point to this time period. Many of these states developed societies in reaction to the perceived excesses and vices of the Old Federation, which ought to provide lots of fodder for adventures.

## THE AGE OF WARRING STATES

This period, during which there was no unified interstellar government, saw the Thousand Suns divided into numerous states of varying size and power. While it is certainly true that this era was characterized by a lack of unity and significant technological and social decline on innumerable worlds, it was not a true dark age, despite recent propaganda to the contrary. Many worlds weathered the Age of Warring States quite well, while several, such as Meridian, only came into their own once the yoke of the Old Federation had been removed.

**Note:** Like the Wars of Independence, the Age of Warring States was a civilizational shift and many events in the Thousand Suns can be traced back to it. In general, worlds and states that owe their origin to this period tend to be more “barbaric” and less concerned with cultural niceties than is common in the Thousand Suns.

## THE CONCORD

The signing of this charter established the current interstellar government and its organs, as well as inaugurating the New Calendar by which all historical dates are now reckoned. More information on the Concord can be found below.

**Note:** The signing of the Concord ended the Age of Warring States and established the Great Peace (or *Granda Paco* in Terra Lingua) under which the Thousand Suns now flourishes. It is, literally, the Year Zero event of the meta-setting. Whether the signing of this charter was an act by worlds united for a common future or something forced upon them by a powerful clique sets the tone for the Terran State that now governs the Thousand Suns.

## THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War was an interstellar conflict between rebel and loyalist factions that began as an attempt to reform the terms of the Concord and quickly degenerated into violence

when the reformists' demands were not met. Further complicating matters were efforts by various political leaders to use the conflict as a vehicle for seizing greater power for themselves. Lasting nearly a decade, the Civil War ended with a restoration of the status quo ante bellum and promises of reform. To date, few reform proposals have been discussed, let alone enacted, leading some to fear that it is only a matter of time before further civil unrest results and once again plunges the Thousand Suns into war.

**Note:** The details of the Civil War are left for each GM to determine in his own campaign. An important factor to consider is how many of both the rebel and loyalist leaders survived the conflict and what became of them. If, for example, the rebels were treated harshly, the odds of another conflict are greater. Likewise, if the loyalists fought honorably and treated their opponents with a degree of respect, genuine reform may occur. In any event, the Civil War is the last great event of the meta-setting. After it, all that remains is whatever future the GM and his players create.

## THE CONCORD

The Concord is the name of the document signed by several dozen worlds (known to history as the United Worlds in Council) that decided, after a period of intense diplomacy, to pledge themselves to the re-establishment of a united interstellar government and put an end to the anarchy of the Age of Warring States. The Concord sets down the constitutional powers and responsibilities of this new government, as well of its member worlds. The Concord also created the organs of governance by which the new interstellar state would exert its authority.

### ARTICLES OF THE CONCORD

While there is no need to enumerate the intricacies of the Concord, a few of its most important articles are worth mentioning, as they all have a profound impact on the meta-setting.

#### SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE TERRAN STATE

Though composed of many individual worlds, each with their own local laws and customs, the Terran State of which they are members enjoys supreme legal and political authority. Laws passed by the Concordium (p. 246) are the ultimate basis for all other laws, which is to say that local laws generally cannot contradict federal/imperial laws. Likewise, all member worlds must acknowledge the authority of the Terran State and its organs as the final arbiters of disputes or other conflicts.

#### UNIFIED STANDARDS

The Concord establishes a number of standards for use by all member worlds. This includes a calendar, a currency, and a timekeeping and measurement system. All worlds must accept and use these standards when dealing with the Terran State and other members. They are free to use other standards locally but these standards never take precedence over those established by the Concord.

#### NO MULTI-WORLD MEMBERS

Each world is an individual member of the Terran State. There are no formal multi-world groupings of any sort, meaning that no world may possess colonies or subject worlds apart

from those cases where the Terran State has granted either a specific exception or a trusteeship. Consequently, most colonization efforts are instigated by the Terran State or its organs or by independent organizations that are not agents of either the Terran State or any of its member worlds.

### **THIRD MAN IN**

A consequence of the forbidding of multi-world members is that, while two member worlds may go to (limited) war with one another when no other means of resolving a dispute can be found, neither side may engage off-world allies or parties in the conflict. That is, the war must be between the two disputants and no one else. They may employ off-world mercenaries and turn to others not directly involved for materiel and other assistance, but third parties may not involve themselves directly in the conflict. Unsurprisingly, this article is probably abused more than any other and the Terran State has been known to turn a blind eye to abuses of it when doing so serves its political purposes.

### **NO WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

The Terran State reserves to itself weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear and biological weapons, and deals harshly with any world or group that attempts to seize, let alone use, such weapons. While the Terran State generally prefers a laissez-faire approach to most matters, the abuse of this article is always dealt with swiftly, lest others come to see weapons of mass destruction as a means for keeping the Terran State at bay.

### **EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW**

Every citizen of the Terran State is held accountable for his actions. In addition, every citizen possesses sovereign rights that are guaranteed by the Concord. Under the imperial option (described below), this article is somewhat weakened because of the presence of a noble class with greater political clout than common citizens. Even then, nobles are not, strictly speaking, above the law, as they too can be brought to trial for their misdeeds and can expect punishment should they fail in their responsibilities as peers of the realm.

### **NO SLAVERY**

Any creature deemed to be sapient, however primitive, is considered a citizen of the Terran State and possessed of the full rights pertaining thereto. Chattel slavery is thus strictly forbidden by the Terran State and anyone who attempts to flout this law is treated very harshly.

## **THE CONCORDIUM**

Chief among the governmental organs established by the Concord is the legislature known as the Concordium. Divided into two chambers, the Assembly, whose representatives are chosen by member worlds at regular intervals, and the Senate, whose representatives are appointed for life to represent entire sectors, the Concordium debates and enacts laws. The extent of the Concordium's power and prestige varies from one version of the meta-setting to another. In some, it is very important and the true center of power, whereas in others it might be a corrupt, toy legislature, intended primarily for show rather than for the actual exercise of authority. Exactly which of these is the case sets the tone for one's campaign and thus the Game Master is once again encouraged to think carefully about how he wishes to portray this element of the meta-setting.

The Concord also established numerous devices and insignia intended to be universally recognizable as symbols of the new era brought about in Year 0. Chief among these is the Great Crest, which shows a field of stars that represent the Thousand Suns. At the base of many versions of the crest are the words, in *Lingua Terra*, *Destino Pli Brila ol Mil Sunoj* — “a destiny brighter than a thousand suns,” which is a line from Johane Coelho’s famous poem penned on the occasion of the *Vojaĝanto*’s launch.



## THE TERRAN STATE

The signing of the Concord in Year 0 marks the end of the Age of Warring States. The Concord established an interstellar government that was heir to the best of the Old Federation while – it was hoped – avoiding its worst mistakes. The exact nature of the interstellar government it established is one of the most important decisions the Game Master must make about his version of the Thousand Suns meta-setting.

As noted in **Chapter 10** (starting on p. 184), Imperial SF usually assumed that the interstellar government of the future would be either a democratic but corrupt federation or an autocratic but benevolent empire. The meta-setting likewise assumes these two alternatives and provides information in this chapter on how to tailor the game depending on which alternative the GM choose. What follows is a brief overview of each option. More specific information pertaining to the setting as a whole, as well as to the consequences of choosing one type of government over another, can be found in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### SECOND FEDERATION

The first option is called the federal option and assumes that the Concord established a literal successor to the Old Federation – a Second Federation, sometimes called the Thousand-Sun Federation. Under this option, the Old Federation is usually called the First Federation, to emphasize its role as the predecessor to the Second Federation. The Federation is, nominally at least, a democratic republican union of worlds. Whether its commitment to democracy is more than words is for the GM to determine.

### EMPIRE OF THE THOUSAND SUNS

The second option is called the imperial option, which assumes that the Concord established an empire, complete with an emperor and hereditary nobility – the Empire of the Thousand Suns. Under this option, the Old Federation is called simply that, so as to emphasize that its failures were the result of outdated thinking that the Empire has wisely abandoned. The Empire can range from a tin pot dictatorship to a constitutional monarchy, but in all cases, the Terran State is not primarily a democratic one.

## HEADS OF STATE

In keeping with the general philosophy of this chapter, no specific names or biographies are provided for the current leader of the Terran State. Instead, it offers a number of alternatives, from which each Game Master can select and modify as suits his own interpretation of the *THOUSAND SUNS* meta-setting. Below are descriptions of the First Citizen and the emperor, as well as eight archetypes (four for each campaign option) of the galactic leader drawn from Imperial SF literature. These archetypes are by no means exhaustive and the GM is encouraged to mix and match between them, as well as to create his own variants, according to his wishes and the needs of his campaign.

### THE FIRST CITIZEN

The head of the Federation government is the First Citizen, which may or may not be his actual title. Depending on the structure and nature of the Federation, he might actually hold the title of President, Prime Minister, Premier, or Chancellor, among many others. He might govern by being an independently elected chief executive or he may be the leader of the largest political party in the Concordium. The exact nature and extent of his legal authority is entirely up to the Game Master, bearing in mind that there are differences in flavor between a Federation headed by an American-style president, a European-style first minister, and a revolutionary-style elected leader.

In addition to his legally constituted powers, the First Citizen often possesses a great deal of “moral authority,” with which he can sway both the electorate and the Concordium to act as he deems best for the Federation. The extent to which a First Citizen can call upon this authority depends greatly on his perceived personal integrity, with some First Citizens having little or no credibility in this regard while others are (literally) unimpeachable and thus able to command great respect.

### THE PUPPET

This First Citizen archetype is a person who is not personally corrupt and may even be quite upstanding personally – but he is weak-willed and easily manipulated by his advisors, who use him as a vehicle for their own ambitions. The Puppet works well in campaigns where it is not the government as a whole or the First Citizen himself who is tainted but a cabal of schemers in the First Citizen’s inner circle. This archetype sets a conspiratorial tone, but also a hopeful one, in that the exposure of the advisors might either free the First Citizen from their grip or pave the way for the election of a better, stronger man to the office.

### THE CORRUPT POLITICO

This First Citizen archetype is a person who is personally corrupt and his assumption of leadership is part of his plan for enriching himself and his cronies. He may or may not be a tyrant, who abuses both law and tradition in a bid for greater power, but he is definitely venal and vicious, with no regard for the well-being of the Federation beyond what serves his own ends. This archetype can set a dark tone by implying either that the electorate is, at best, stupid and easily duped or, at worst, corrupt itself. Likewise, if the Corrupt Politico is a tyrant, his actions may call into question the integrity of the Federation itself, creating an environment for adventures with a politically radical cast to them.



## THE MAN OF VISION

This First Citizen archetype is a person who inspires greatness in others by his vision of a better future. He may or may not be personally flawed in some way, but he is nevertheless a person who hopes to bring about a better tomorrow for the Federation. The Man of Vision can be a tragic archetype if few people share his vision or if his personal foibles hobble the chances of his dream ever becoming reality. On the other hand, he can also be a very hopeful archetype, a light shining in the darkness around whom individuals of similar conviction can rally.

## THE ZEALOT

Unlike the Man of Vision, this First Citizen archetype is not guided by a larger vision, but he has one issue – lifting the ban on AI, the equality of all planets, war with the hated Hen Jaa, stricter laws against psi – that he advances to the bitter end. He might be a heroic zealot like Abraham Lincoln or a monster like Maximilien Robespierre. This archetype can be hopeful or dark, depending on the issue the Zealot takes as his own.

## THE EMPEROR

The head of the imperial government is the emperor, enshrined in the Concord as its Final Arbiter and Supreme Guardian. The emperor reigns for life, although he may choose to abdicate his throne prior to his death for any reason he chooses. Traditionally, the firstborn child of the emperor succeeds him upon his death, although, again, exceptions can be made for a variety of reasons. Provided the Concordium concurs (as it has the responsibility of confirming heirs to the throne), someone other than the firstborn issue of the previous emperor, including someone not related to him by blood, may assume his mantle.

The emperor acts as the chief executive of the empire, administering it through an array of functionaries and promulgating laws for it through his Chancellor (with the consent of the Concordium). Only he has the authority to grant new patents of nobility above the rank of Baron. He also acts as the court of final appeal for both commoners and nobility, although it is rare for the emperor to hear cases in all but the most extreme circumstances. Law and custom limit the emperor's power, but individual emperors have used (and abused) their power to varying degrees throughout history.

## THE DODDERING FOOL

Almost identical to the First Citizen archetype the Puppet, the Doddering Fool is an emperor (usually elderly) who is not the true power in the empire. Someone else, whether it be an ambitious advisor, the heir to the throne, or a younger second spouse, manipulates the emperor to their own ends. This archetype can be either a dark or a hopeful one, depending on whether a virtuous replacement for the aged emperor is waiting in the wings. At the very least, the Doddering Fool archetype suggests a period of stasis or slow decline, as vultures circle in expectation of the emperor's death and the plays for power that inevitably follow it.

## THE NAÏF

This archetype is a young and inexperienced emperor, newly on the throne and unsure of himself and his abilities. He may possess genuine talent and simply lack experience or he may be a Doddering Fool in the making. In either case, this archetype suggests an uncertain tone, during which time the Naïf – and the empire – discovers his true nature. Prior to this point, advisors, both good and bad, may attempt to find a place for themselves in court and which of them do so sets the tone for later years. If the Naïf evolves into a good and visionary



Rodriko III ponders his empire.

emperor, this archetype sets the stage for a new Golden Age, while the evolution into either a mediocre or tyrannical emperor implies the slow slide toward Armageddon.

### **THE ONCE AND FUTURE EMPEROR**

This archetype is much like the First Citizen archetype the Man of Vision, right down to the possibility of the emperor's personal foibles. The Once and Future Emperor is, as his name implies, Arthur reborn – a man ahead of his time who ushers in a Golden Age for the empire. Whether that age is brief or lengthy can vary, depending on whether the GM wishes to set a dark or hopeful tone. In either case, the Once and Future Emperor is a personally attractive individual seeking only what is best for his realm and his subjects.

### **THE TYRANT**

This archetype is a cliché but that doesn't make it unsuitable for use. The emperor is in this case an iron heeled dictator who brooks no dissent to his rule and uses his formidable authority and unmatched military power to wipe out his enemies. The Tyrant may or may not be personally corrupt, indulging in all manner of debauchery, but he always rules in a heavy-handed fashion. This archetype usually signals a dark tone, but it's possible to imagine well-intentioned Tyrants who act out of conscience and believe their harsh methods are the only way to preserve the empire from chaos.

## **ORGANIZATIONS**

Life in the Thousand Suns is partially defined by several organizations of interstellar scope, both governmental and civilian. What follows are overviews of but a few of the most important of these organizations. Game Master should feel free both to alter the organizations provided here, as well as to invent his own. The Thousand Suns are a huge place and just about any type of organization one can imagine probably exists somewhere.

### **MILITARY**

The military is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful and prominent organs of the Terran State's power in the Thousand Suns. On many far-flung worlds in the Marches, the military may be the only regular contact that their inhabitants have with agents of the Terran State. Consequently, the military tries very hard to maintain a positive image, since their actions color how the Terran State is popularly viewed. That's not to suggest that the military is squeaky clean and without its share of problems — far from it!— but there's no question that the military tries harder than most organs of the Terran State to present itself in as positive a light as possible.

### **THE NAVY**

The Navy, more commonly known simply as the Fleet, is the primary military force of the Terran State. It is by far the most powerful in terms of sheer destructive ability. The Navy is an extremely political service: dominated by powerful families and used as a launchpad for political ambitions.

At the heart of the Navy are the fleets themselves. There are many of these groupings, each tailored to the area and mission. The center of each fleet are the massive battleships and dreadnaughts, gigantic ships crewed by thousands that can devastate worlds either with their massive weapons or with the waves of fighters they carry. Supporting these monsters

are the medium warships, battle cruisers and cruisers, and a horde of smaller vessels built for scouting and close defense — the corvettes, destroyers, and escorts. Accompanying a fleet are any number of tenders, repair ships, troop carriers for the Naval Infantry, couriers, and other vessels as needed. A full fleet gathered in one system is an impressive and terrifying sight.

Fleet activity is centered on the many naval bases scattered throughout the Thousand Suns. The bases are placed according to strategic need and response times. When possible, bases are put in systems that can provide essential support like dockyards and re-supply. Due to the needs of the Terran State, however, a good number of bases are placed in backwater systems, in barren systems, or even in deep space.

Enlistment in the Navy is open to any citizen who can pass the fairly easy entrance exams. The basic term of service is ten years. Officers are trained, with very rare exception, at the naval academies. These facilities, located on Core worlds, train would-be officers in a five-year program. The final year is spent as a midshipman in fleet service. Appointment to the academy is allegedly by merit, but it is well known that political pull can secure a spot for members of influential families.

## NAVAL INFANTRY

The Naval Infantry (NI or Marines) serves many roles as a semi-independent part of the Navy. They act as shipboard security, shore police, guard naval facilities, and operate the Navy's prisons. But perhaps their most important job is as a quick-reaction force for surface actions. NI troops are trained to hit hard, move fast, and accomplish their missions no matter the odds. To this end, their selection and training is the harshest of all the military services. Casualties are an expected part of training. Even the most junior recruit finds himself thrust into leadership roles early and often. Unlike the other services, the NI is fanatical about commissioning officers from the ranks. The vast majority of officers served at least a few years as an enlisted man before being sent to officers' school.

The unit most often deployed is the *Surface Expeditionary Unit*, roughly 800 NI strong. This unit is trained to be able to handle almost any task from disaster assistance to assaulting a fortified complex. A SEU is generally made up of five companies. For larger operations, several SEU combine into a *Surface Expeditionary Force*. Several SEF create an *Invasion Group*, the largest NI force seen.

The Naval Infantry is a light force, lacking heavy armor and fire support (except for that provided by the fleet in orbit.) Because of this, NI troopers are liberally equipped with whatever they can carry. The image of a NI trooper, loaded down with gear, is a common one in the Thousand Suns.

## THE ARMY

Better known to most as the Legions, the Army is the largest of the military forces. Their unofficial motto is *Marteli kaj Anvil* —“hammer and anvil”— and refers to both their role in breaking attacks on the Thousand Suns by stout defense and their hammering of those enemies in the attack. There is nothing subtle about a legion on the attack.

The base unit of the Army is the famed Legion. Each legion has roughly 20,000 troops and scores of combat vehicles. Legions are divided into ten “Groups” of four different types. Each Group is further divided into ten 200-man Bands.

- *Assault* groups are the heavy infantry. Assault forces are mixed armored infantry and fighting vehicles trained to work in close concert. Most legions have six Assault Groups.

- *Hunter* groups are light infantry/special operations. Trained in reconnaissance, raiding, and skirmish tactics, Hunters are experts in infiltrating enemy lines to raise havoc. Most legions have two Hunter Groups.
- *Storm* groups are the modern version of artillery. Using a variety of brilliant missile, saturation munitions, and micro-nukes, Storm groups unleash devastation from hundreds of miles away. Legions usually have a single Storm Group.
- *Support* groups provide all the battlefield support in terms of logistics, medical, repair, and administration services. There is one Support Group in each Legion.

Each Legion also has a Command Band, supporting the commander and his staff.

The Army is constantly expanding and creates new legions in vast numbers if needed. Legions tend to be raised from a single world (or a close grouping of systems) to foster a feeling of brotherhood among the troops. Academies for officers exist in many places with varying quality.

Legions are stationed where needed, although there is a bias to keep them on or near the worlds they were raised on. This has led to some Core Worlds Legions becoming parade ground troops not seeing much action. In contrast, some Legions from the Marches are rarely in their barracks, being on campaign almost constantly. This has led to the famous aphorism “Core legions are all spit and polish. Marcher legions are just the same, but without the polish.”

#### polvo

Polvo is the name in Lingua Terra for a plant originating on the Czanik homeworld of Galj, characterized by broad leaves, which, when dried out, turn into a fine, black powder that is a powerful alkaloid. Most Czanik enjoy the smell of polvo smoke, which they burn like incense in their homes and even in some public spaces. After First Contact, some Terrans learned to appreciate the smell of polvo – as well as its mildly psychoactive properties. Polvo cigarettes and pipes are now popular among some Terrans, who enjoy them not only for their inherent properties but also for their associations in Terran culture with being sophisticated and well-traveled.

## THE TRAVELERS

Throughout this book, there are occasional references to an extinct race of ancient aliens called the Travelers. The first time the term was used in reference to the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map, a mysterious artifact that provided Terrans with an incomplete jump map of several thousand star systems. Given the nature of this artifact, the term “Travelers” quickly became attached to its creators and the name has stuck. Over the centuries, the term has become a generic one, not necessarily referring to any single extinct alien species – of which scientists recognize many – but merely meaning an advanced species no longer extant in the galaxy.

What became of the Travelers? Incontrovertible evidence to support any thesis conclusively is rare but there is quite a lot of circumstantial evidence to suggest that many Traveler species destroyed themselves – sometimes quite spectacularly. Indeed, the Thousand Suns are littered with worlds that bear what appear to be the scars of high-tech warfare. Likewise, the presence of many unfinished and/or partially destroyed technological projects, such as ring worlds and Dyson spheres, strongly suggests an abrupt end to many Traveler



There is no “official” answer to this question nor is there any answer to the question of what became of them or whether any of the three popular theses is correct. Each GM must decide for himself and his campaign the answer to these questions. In many, if not most, campaigns there is no need for a definitive answer one way or the other, as all Traveler species have been extinct longer than the Czanik have been a starfaring species — a very long time indeed. If, however, a GM needs a definitive answer for his campaign, he should come up with one. He need never fear that a future *THOUSAND SUNS* supplement will invalidate his chosen explanation. The Travelers are yet another area where GMs are encouraged to use their own creativity and make *THOUSAND SUNS* their own game.

civilizations. An alternative explanation has been posited, which argues that at least some Traveler species did not destroy themselves but rather evolved en masse, transcending this plane of existence and moving on to some “higher” realm of consciousness. There is even less evidence for this thesis, but it nevertheless enjoys some support in the scientific community, if only because it offers a more hopeful interpretation of the mystery of the Travelers.

The mostly widely held explanation borrows from both of these previous explanations. According to this interpretation, technology eventually reaches a hard limit, beyond which it is not normally possible to advance by ordinary means. There is some support for this contention, given that the technological advancement curve of Terran civilization has flattened over the past few centuries, with comparatively few breakthroughs in either scientific theory or application. To advance beyond this hard limit, a species must change its ways — and means!— of thinking, which may involve some form of evolutionary shift, whether self-induced or as the result of natural processes. Such a change either pushes a species into a new mode of being, where science and technology may once again advance, or utterly destroys it.

Once again, there is little incontrovertible evidence to support this third thesis, but many scientists in the Thousand Suns tacitly accept it or some portion of it. Consequently, research into areas such as artificial intelligence, psi, biological augmentation, and other related areas is quietly discouraged, out of the fear that such things might push the human race to the brink of a new stage of evolution, one that is more likely to have disastrous results than positive ones. That elder species like the Czanik agree with this approach is taken as a sign of its wisdom.

## THE ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA FOUNDATION

One of the more influential organizations in the Thousand Suns is neither an organ of the Terran State nor a great commercial enterprise (though it does make money — quite a lot of it, in fact). This organization is the Encyclopedia Galactica Foundation, more commonly known as the Encyclopedia Foundation or simply the Foundation. Established shortly after the signing of the Concord, the Foundation produces an encyclopedia of all knowledge, which it sells to eager readers throughout the Thousand Suns. The Encyclopedia Galactica is a compendium of every subject, from jump physics to xenobiology to history. The encyclopedia has a well deserved reputation both for its thorough treatment of its contents and its relative objectivity. The Foundation has remained aloof from politics for centuries and makes a concerted effort to be seen as a “neutral observer” in the conflicts of the day.

The Encyclopedia Galactica is constantly revised and updated. The Foundation accomplishes this by sponsoring teams of researchers who travel throughout the Thousand Suns to visit historical sites, interview important people, explore ruins, observe alien species,

and much more. As a result, the Foundation employs a vast number of people from all backgrounds and professions in the pursuit of knowledge. On occasion, the Foundation has come under fire because of hiring practices, particularly when it employs individuals Core worlds society deems “inappropriate.” The Foundation has always maintained that they pass no judgment on the individuals they hire so long as they commit no crimes or jeopardize the mission for which they were hired. To that end, they hire individuals based on their areas of expertise and usefulness to the job at hand. If that means hiring a hard-bitten mercenary captain from the Marches rather than a lauded research scientist from the Core, so be it.

## MEGACORPORATIONS

Without a doubt, the megacorporations are among the most influential non-governmental bodies in the Thousand Suns. The megacorporations are businesses that concentrate on certain markets and produce little of great quality outside those markets. Competition between megacorporations within same market is fierce, but there are relatively few instances of cross-market conflict. There are thousands of megacorporations in the Thousand Suns. Many of these are publicly owned and administered by a board of directors. Private families or individuals own others. In every case, the personalities of those who run the megacorporation strongly influence the nature of it and its business practices.

As described below, the nature of commerce in the Thousand Suns is unlike that in past ages. Transporting large quantities of most goods via D-Drive is neither efficient nor cost-effective. The few cargoes that are transported from world to world are generally high-value goods and luxury items that cannot easily be reproduced. Megacorporations distribute most of their product lines in a manner reminiscent of a franchise system.

The megacorporations themselves are primarily responsible for producing and distributing technical specifications. These specifications are designs and schematics that can then be purchased by local manufacturers. These manufacturers, all of whose methods and materials (most of which are also purchased from the megacorporation) must meet the standards of the megacorporations, in turn produce items in accordance with the designs in the data package. This guarantees a consistency and uniformity for products across hundreds of worlds. Thus, a Takamatsu-Hegenauer laser pistol produced on a Core world is identical to one produced in the Marches. A consumer can be assured of the quality of his purchase of a megacorporation product, no matter where he bought it.

## ECONOMICS

The Core and civilized worlds of the Thousand Suns are extraordinarily wealthy by the standards of past ages. Even most worlds on the Marches possess wealth beyond that imagined in earlier times. Automated factories mass-produce most items inexpensively. Likewise, the mining of asteroids and other stellar bodies is a largely automated and inexpensive process that provides most worlds with all the raw materials, whether they be metals or organics, they need. Between this and the use of fusion powered recycling, there is rarely any need to import metals or non-organic materials from one world to another; everything can be easily produced locally. This includes most organic materials as well, such as pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs.

Of course, there are some materials that are simply too expensive and/or too infeasible to synthesize locally. These are mostly luxury goods of one sort or another. Good examples of such luxuries include decorative materials, fresh food, exotic pharmaceuticals and intoxicants, as well as living creatures. Similarly, artworks hold special value, as do artifacts from



earlier eras or from ancient civilizations, whether human or alien. Certainly replicas of these items can be made cheaply and easily but Terrans have a fondness for “real” items and are often willing to pay premium prices for them.

Most manufactured goods are made locally as well. Unless conditions dictate otherwise, megacorporations find it far more economically viable to build an automated factory on every world to produce goods for sale than to import the goods from another world. Because fashions change and fads can spring up unexpectedly, even automated factories require new technical specifications to produce new goods in keeping with the change in public tastes. Independent merchants can make money by transporting new specifications to far-off worlds or by smuggling illegal copies of specifications. Likewise, megacorporations are not above producing artificial shortages to increase demand for manufactured items. Traders who can flout such megacorporate economic manipulation may make themselves rich – and incur the wrath of these mighty engines of interstellar commerce. The specifications for restricted items, such as high-tech weapons and armor, are usually only legally available to certain designated automated factories. A brisk trade exists in either bootlegged specifications or in surplus military gear in the Marches and, especially, in Wildspace.

Finally, travel from world to world is a lucrative endeavor and many traders sell passage aboard their vessels, particularly if they travel to worlds not serviced (or at least not well serviced) by the major transport lines of the Thousand Suns. Of course, travel aboard a trading vessel is fraught with its own dangers, from pirates to the often-poor quality of medical care available for slow passengers, making it risky. On the other hand, if faced with getting to a far-off world aboard a trading vessel or not at all, many adventurers freely choose the former — and the dangers it brings with it.

## INTERSTELLAR NEIGHBORS

Though the Terran State is by far the most important interstellar government in the Thousand Suns, it is not the only one. Numerous other governments exist and they interact with the Terran State in a variety of ways. The most significant ones are described in this section, but the GM should feel no compunction about adding to or subtracting from those presented here, as suits his own campaign.

### HEN JAA HEGEMONY

The Hen Jaa Hegemony is the main rival to Terran civilization among the Thousand Suns. This interstellar empire, though smaller than that of the Terrans, is growing, in part because the Hen Jaa ensure that it does so. When diplomacy does not work to induce worlds to join their fold, outright conquest is always an option. In addition, the Hen Jaa are a young and vibrant species. Their numbers are growing and they see the stars as their birthright. They have even managed to impress many Terrans with their societal energy and determination, which they see as a welcome difference with jaded Terran civilization. Whether the Hegemony will one day overtake the Thousand Suns or fall victim to their own internal problems, only the future can say.

### MYRMIDON DOMAINS

The Myrmidon Domains are a collection of squabbling interstellar states over which the Myrmidon clade forms the ruling class. Each Myrmidon Domain is different than the next, though most tend to be militaristic “enlightened despotisms” whose rulers see themselves as philosopher-kings destined to make the galaxy a better place through their schemes. True

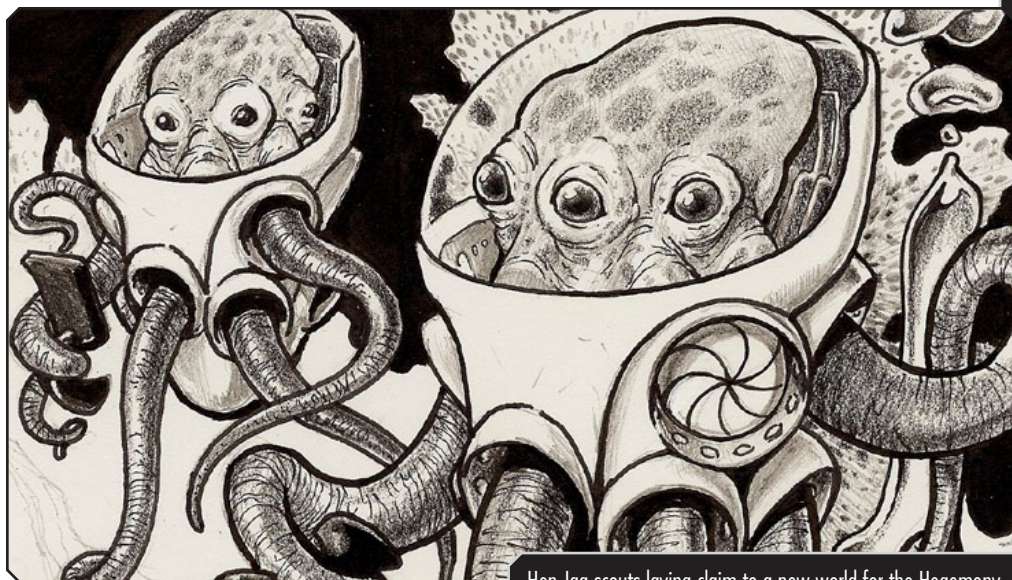
to their nature, the Myrmidon Domains incessantly battle one another, both through force of arms and more subtle stratagems, constantly weeding out the “unfit” Domains and thus “improving” the clade as a whole. The Domains are often antagonistic toward Terran civilization, which they regard as “weak,” but they rarely engage in outright violence against it, preferring to play diplomatic chess matches, looking for the opportunity to play their advantage.

## THE WARRING STATES

The Age of Warring States (see above) was a turbulent period in history after the fall of the Old Federation. During that time, many interstellar states arose, most of which either did not last or were absorbed into the Terran State sometime after the Concord was signed. A handful of them survived and continue to exist to this day. Disdainfully called the Warring States due to their origins, not all of these polities are militant and some are effectively clients and allies of the Terran State. Of course, some are antagonistic and the generally rough nature of their societies (compared to Terran civilization anyway) contributes to their being viewed as “barbarians.” The Warring States exist in Wildspace and are inhabited by humans and aliens of several sorts.

## YBAARAA CONSOCIATION

Much like the Myrmidons, the Kriilkna do not possess a single interstellar state, instead having a collection of them. Where they differ from the Myrmidons is that the Kriilkna states have a theoretical union through their religion Ybaaraa. This union encourages the Kriilkna to work together for a common purpose, most importantly the spread of the species throughout the galaxy. By and large this arrangement does work, keeping squabbles to a minimum, but it also lacks the political and administrative unity necessary to make the Consociation a major player in the Thousand Suns. Unsurprisingly, some Kriilkna have begun to think heretical thoughts, namely that Ybaaraa might be impeding rather than encouraging progress for the species. Some of these Kriilkna have turned to piracy and raiding, both on their fellow Kriilkna and on Terrans, leading to increased tensions between the two species.



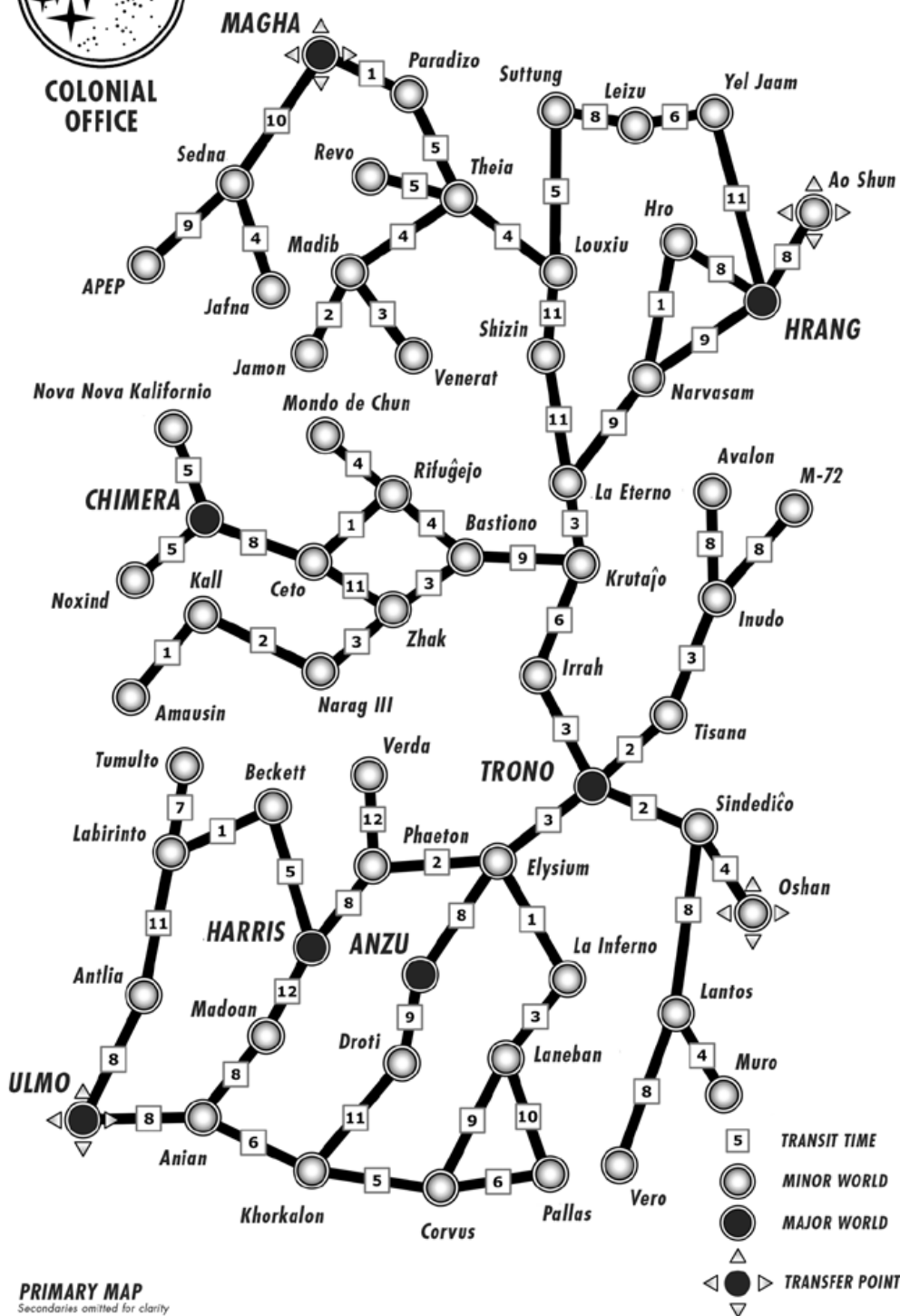
Hen Jaa scouts laying claim to a new world for the Hegemony.



COLONIAL  
OFFICE

# LIMZANO SECTOR

500 NK



# CHAPTER 15: LIMZANO SECTOR

*Because today we are sailing out among the stars, we are more akin to Europeans overrunning America or Greeks colonizing the Mediterranean littoral than to our ancestors of only a few generations ago. We, too, are discoverers, pioneers, traders, missionaries, composers of epic and saga. Our people have grown bolder than their fathers, ambitious, individualistic; on the darker side, greed, callousness, disregard for the morrow, violence, often outright banditry have returned. Such is the nature of societies possessed of, and by, a frontier.*

*— Poul Anderson, "Hiding Place" (1961)*

# CHAPTER 15: LIMZANO SECTOR

At the edge of Terran space lies Limzano Sector, a grouping of more than sixty explored star systems divided amongst several interstellar powers. A Marches sector (see p. 25), Limzano is presented in this chapter either for the Game Master to use directly or as inspiration in creating his own sectors. What follows is a brief overview of Limzano's history, governance, and power groups, along with descriptions of several worlds. Most of its worlds, though, are purposefully left undescribed in order to make it easier for the GM to adapt the sector to his own campaign.

## HISTORY

Though located far from the Core Worlds, Terran explorers visited the Limzano sector not long after the establishment of the Concord (see p. 244). Permanent settlements were soon established on Oshan, Sindedičo, and Trono, all of which in turn launched further expeditions into Limzano and other nearby sectors. As the Terrans expanded, they encountered the Hen Jaa, who'd already spread their tentacles into this area of space as well. For their part, the Hen Jaa found further expansion halted by the Myrmidons, several of whose warlords had claimed nearby worlds.

Despite the presence of three mutually hostile powers, Limzano remained a quiet backwater of the Thousand Suns until the Civil War (see p. 244). At that time, military forces from several of its worlds were withdrawn to fight in other sectors, leaving Limzano's worlds easy prey for the Hen Jaa — or so many expected. Surprisingly, the Hen Jaa did not take the opportunity to invade, but the mere fear of the possibility led to the secession of multiple worlds beyond Krutajo, who felt the Terran State had abandoned them.

After the conclusion of the Civil War, these worlds retained their independence, but rumors abound that the Terran State is planning to reincorporate them by any means necessary. True or not, this concern colors many aspects of life in Limzano, from politics to commerce and even to entertainment, where holovid shows often use a “rebel worlds vs. the TerraState” as a backdrop. Others prefer to point to Hen Jaa machinations as the real threat in the sector, particularly in the form of spies and *agents provocateurs*. Others still suggest it is the megacorporations who are most to be feared, given the power and influence they wield. Regardless, Limzano is clearly on the cusp of changes and only the future will reveal the nature of those changes.

## GOVERNANCE

Limzano has never been governed by a single interstellar power, a situation made worse since the Civil War. Four governments lay claim to the sector's worlds, each described below.

### THE TERRAN STATE

The majority of the worlds of Limzano are part of the Terran State, with La Eterno being on the border with the Hen Jaa holdings and Krutajo being on the border with the Kallian League.

Trono serves as the sector's capital and seat of its governor-general. Despite the large number of worlds it claims, the State's authority in Limzano is extremely limited, especially the farther one gets from Trono and the worlds immediately connected to it. The Terran State views Limzano as a backwater and, as such, governs it with a light touch, though there is a sizable military presence in several systems as a bulwark against the Hen Jaa.

## THE HEN JAA HEGEMONY

The Hen Jaa claim nine worlds in Limzano, most of which are sparsely populated except by military personnel. The primary exception is the high population world the Hen Jaa call Hrang, which is also home to Hen Jaa colonists as well as a native species called the Inirod (see p. 267). The Hegemony would dearly love to expand its holdings in Limzano, but has so far been stymied by both the Myrmidons and the Terran State. Consequently, the Hen Jaa have turned increasingly to backing local rebels, terrorists, and other malcontents to act as their cat's-paws. Conspiracy theorists suggest that the Kallian League is in fact their instrument, a wholly unproven assertion that nevertheless worries more than a few Terran strategists.

## MYRMIDON DOMINIONS

Ten worlds in the sector are Myrmidon holdings, the strongest of which is centered on Magha. These worlds do not form a united front, except in resisting attempts by the Hen Jaa to expand into their territory. For the most part, the Myrmidons squabble amongst themselves, constantly jockeying for supremacy and looking for signs of weakness in their rivals. As such, they are not considered a significant threat by the Terran State, though individual Myrmidon warlords often cause trouble in their bids for power over their fellows.

## THE KALLIAN LEAGUE

The Kallian League is the newest political entity in Limzano, having been formed during the Civil War as a mutual defense association of the eleven worlds beyond Krutajo that seceded from the Terran State. The league takes its name from the world of Kall (see p. 210), where the governments of the newly independent worlds met and formed a mutual defense pact, fearing that the State might attempt to recover these lost systems by force. So far, that has not happened, but the League is ever vigilant against such a possibility. Most League worlds are lightly populated and permissive, making them popular destinations for criminals, dissidents, and adventurers.

## POWER GROUPS

In addition to the four interstellar governments described above, there are also a number of non-governmental power groups in the sector that exert significant influence. Some of these are briefly described here so that players and GMs alike might use them as potential allies and/or opponents to the characters. What follows is by no means exhaustive and GMs are encouraged to populate Limzano with as many power groups as their campaigns require.

## ENCYCLOPEDIA FOUNDATION

The Encyclopedia Foundation has interests in most sectors of the Thousand Suns, including Limzano. Here, the Foundation is especially keen to learn more about the alien Inirod and the Traveller ruins on Apep (see p. 264). However, the Foundation has such wide interests that its agents could conceivably be found on any world. Furthermore, it always has need of



new agents and thus makes an excellent patron for characters engaged in any kind of vaguely academic or scientific activity.

## MALAVARA ENTREPRENO

The “Bountiful Enterprise” is an interstellar criminal syndicate with connections across the Thousand Suns that’s recently turned its attention toward Limzano sector. The Entrepreno operates on worlds controlled by both the State and the Kallian League and is heavily involved in both smuggling and industrial espionage, often on behalf of megacorporate interests. The syndicate also has its hooks in numerous independent merchants, whom it presses into service after first providing them with financial assistance.

## MEGACORPORATIONS

In addition to AMICor (see *Chimera*, p. 264), several other megacorporations are prominent in Limzano sector. A few of the most important are:

- **Duopa Helico:** A bio-engineering corporation, Duopa Helico is a leader in the field of genetic enhancements for Terrans and other species.
- **Hermes Carriers:** Hermes is a powerful shipping firm whose large fleet of freighters hauls materials from one world to the next. The company has a reputation for honesty and efficiency.
- **Precision Arms:** This weapons manufacturer has research facilities located throughout the sector, including La Eterno (see p. 265). Precision is also a backer of several mercenary companies, thus further extending its influence.
- **Steele Unlimited:** Named for its flamboyantly wealthy owner, Arlen Steele, Steel Unlimited has positioned itself as a “patriotic” corporation that firmly supports the Terran State and its endeavors. Consequently, it has large contracts on many State-controlled worlds.
- **Terran Media Network:** TMN dominates news reporting in Limzano and surrounding sectors. The network has adopted a very “pro-Marches” editorial stance, agitating on behalf of causes of beneficial to frontier worlds and portraying the Core worlds as corrupt, decadent, and out of touch.

## MERCENARY COMPANIES

Given the tense situation in Limzano, it should come as no surprise that numerous “private military firms” operate in the sector. Some of the most noteworthy are:

- **Alcimedon:** A free company of Myrmidons, Alcimedon will work for any who can pay their exorbitant fees. In return, their employer gets a highly skilled mercs willing to undertake almost any mission, not matter how dangerous.
- **Morta Kapo:** One of the most brutal and effective companies, Morta Kapo operates both within the Terran State and the Kallian League. Most of its mercs were once members of the State’s military, particularly the naval infantry.
- **Sunsubiro:** Consisting of both Terrans and Czanik mercs, Sunsubiro tries hard to operate “cleanly,” abiding strictly by the laws of war and avoiding contracts that might bring it into disrepute.



# WORLDS

Because Limzano Sector is intended as a springboard for Game Masters in creating their own *THOUSAND SUNS* campaigns, only a handful of its worlds are described in this chapter. The remainder are left to the GM to detail as he sees fit, using his imagination and the world generation system presented in **Chapter 11** (starting on p. 196).

## ANZU

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 5000 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard (Tainted)

**Climate:** Freezing ■ **Hydrographics:** 0% ■ **Population:** 9,000,000

**Government:** Monarchy ■ **Law Level:** Free ■ **Tech Level:** VII

**Hooks:** Entertainment, Psi Quirk

A cold desert world, the original colony on Anzu was founded shortly before the establishment of the Concord as a haven for espers who found themselves persecuted for the unique abilities on other worlds. Since then, its population has diversified considerably, but a significant portion of its inhabitants do possess psi powers of one sort or another. In the last century, many of these espers have turned their talents toward the creation of psi-based entertainments, such as telepathic theater and telekinetic sports, which now attract tourists from nearby worlds. Ironically, Anzu's royal family is completely non-psycho.



An umbilical cable is every spacewalker's best friend.

## APEP

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 4000 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard (Tainted)

**Climate:** Temperate ■ **Hydrographics:** 40% ■ **Population:** 6,000,000

**Government:** Dictatorship ■ **Law Level:** Restrictive ■ **Tech Level:** VII

**Hooks:** Academic, Ruins

Apep is an unusual example of a Myrmidon-controlled world in that its ruler, Archon Hektore Sun, is far more interested in scientific pursuits than martial ones. He still has designs on other worlds in Limzano, of course — starting with neighboring Myrmidon planets — but his first goal is to turn Apep into the premier center for research into the Travelers in this part of the Thousand Suns. Extensive ruins dot the equatorial regions of Apep and rumors abound that scientists have recovered advanced technologies of one sort or another from them. True or not, the world has attracted experts in the Travelers from across the sector and beyond, just as Archon Sun had hoped.

## CHIMERA

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 9500 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard

**Climate:** Temperate ■ **Hydrographics:** 70% ■ **Population:** 8,000,000

**Government:** Corporate ■ **Law Level:** Open ■ **Tech Level:** VIII

**Hooks:** Commercial, Manufacturing/Processing

Chimera is an anomaly: a corporate-controlled world that grants a great deal of freedom to its inhabitants — some might say *too much* freedom. The planet is a major holding of the Amalgamated Medical Industries Corporation (AMICor), having established itself here at the height of the Civil War. Cynics suggest that AMICor was hedging its bets on the outcome of the Civil War, but the truth seems to be even more straightforward: it sought a location where it might undertake endeavors that might be illegal within the borders of the Terran State. Although the megacorporation produces many life-saving devices and pharmaceuticals in high demand across the Thousand Suns, it has also shown a willingness to skirt the law — sometimes grossly — in pursuit of profit. Consequently, Chimera has acquired a reputation as a world where anything goes, which has attracted a number of other corporations to it, as well as individuals looking to turn a sol by any means necessary.

## HARRIS

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 9500 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard

**Climate:** Warm ■ **Hydrographics:** 90% ■ **Population:** 5,000,000

**Government:** Representative Democracy ■ **Law Level:** Permissive ■ **Tech Level:** VII

**Hooks:** Conspiracy, Factionalized

The population of Harris is scattered across a dozen or so large islands, each of which was originally established by a different Terran cultural group. Governance of the planet is vested in a council made up of delegates from each of the islands. However, mutual antagonism between the various islands stands in the way of the Planeda Unio party's plans for making Harris an even more important player in Limzano. The party believes that the planet's fractiousness hampers trade and commerce, as well as preventing the rest of the sector from looking to Harris for leadership. Of course, Planeda Unio's close connection to several offworld corporations throws their true intentions into question, with other parties suggesting that they're mere puppets, a charge that Planeda Unio vehemently denies.

## HRANG

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 13,000 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard (Tainted)

**Climate:** Warm ■ **Hydrographics:** 80% ■ **Population:** 800,000,000

**Government:** Governor ■ **Law Level:** Authoritarian ■ **Tech Level:** VI

**Hooks:** Civil Strife. Homeworld

Of Hrang's population of nearly 1 billion, only about 20 million are Hen Jaa, the rest belonging to the native Inirot species. Consequently, Hrang is under harsh military rule, with the Hen Jaa often resorting to brutality to protect their colonists. Though successful in some respects, these methods have also fed a growing resistance movement among the Inirot, some of whose leaders look to the Terrans for assistance. To date, the Terran State has been reluctant to become involved with the resistance, even though it would dearly love to see the Hen Jaa on Hrang thrown into disarray.

## KRUTAJO

**Type:** Hostile ■ **Diameter:** 16,000 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Corrosive

■ **Climate:** Warm ■ **Hydrographics:** 90% ■ **Population:** 10,000

■ **Government:** Oligarchy ■ **Law Level:** Free ■ **Tech Level:** VII

■ **Hooks:** Academic, Xenophilic

Though nominally one of its member worlds, the Terran State maintains an official hands-off policy regarding Krutajo. With a poisonous atmosphere and oceans made of liquid methane, it's an incredibly inhospitable place situated right on the border with Hen Jaa-controlled space. That's why the Fundamento por Planeda Exploro, which administers Krutajo, extended an offer to host Hen Jaa scientists investigating the planet's environment — an offer the Hegemony accepted. There are currently over 500 Hen Jaa planetologists on Krutajo, in addition to close to 500 more Hen Jaa personnel (including, it is rumored, spies). The Fundamento hopes that this gesture of goodwill might encourage better relations between the Terran State and the Hegemony, which, so far, it seems to have.

## LA ETERNO

**Type:** Satellite ■ **Diameter:** 1500 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Thin

**Climate:** Cool ■ **Hydrographics:** 40% ■ **Population:** 700,000

**Government:** Theocracy ■ **Law Level:** Permissive ■ **Tech Level:** VII

**Hooks:** Military, Religious Site

Despite its low permanent population, La Eterno plays an important role in Limzano sector, being the location of a major naval base intended to deter both Hen Jaa and, more recently, Kallian League aggression against the Terran State. La Eterno itself is a moon of a gas giant called Senfineco and is a virtual fortress governed by a militant order dedicated to the religion of La Malkonkerita. A Terran faith popular among soldiers and naval officers, it teaches that life is, literally, a war between the forces of Good and Evil and that an eternal reward awaits those who "fight well" on behalf of Good. The religious leaders of La Eterno are enthusiastic supporters of the Terran State and have made all the world's resources available to the Navy in its efforts to stave off attack.

## MAGHA

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 9500 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard  
**Climate:** Temperate ■ **Hydrographics:** 60% ■ **Population:** 8,000,000  
**Government:** Representative Democracy ■ **Law Level:** Open ■ **Tech Level:** VII  
**Hooks:** Administrative, Military

Magha is a Myrmidon-controlled world whose governance is vested in a chancellor chosen by an elected parliament. Of course, only Myrmidons have the vote, with Terrans and other species treated as second-class citizens. The last few chancellors have worked hard to build up Magha's military might, turning it into a major power in the sector, as proven by its conquest of neighboring Paradizo and Theia 20 years ago. Magha is thus the capital of a small empire and the State believes it's only a matter of time before its chancellor moves against other Myrmidon worlds or even the Hen Jaa, actions that could throw the delicate political balance of Limzano into chaos.

## TRONO

**Type:** Terrestrial ■ **Diameter:** 14,500 km ■ **Atmosphere:** Standard (Tainted)  
**Climate:** Warm ■ **Hydrographics:** 70% ■ **Population:** 8,000,000  
**Government:** Monarchy ■ **Law Level:** Permissive ■ **Tech Level:** VII  
**Hooks:** Administrative, Commercial

If the portion of Limzano controlled by the State has a governmental and commercial hub, it's Trono. Home to the sector's governor-general, several megacorporations, and organs of the State, Trono exerts a powerful influence on other worlds. The planet is governed by an



Surveying the skyline of Juvelo, capital city of Trono.

elected ruler called an autarch, whose rule is absolute during his lifetime. The most recent autarchs have ruled lightly, ushering in an extraordinarily permissive society, but there is no guarantee that future autarchs will follow suit.

## ULMO

**Type:** Asteroid ■ **Diameter:** Not Applicable ■ **Atmosphere:** None

**Climate:** Freezing ■ **Hydrographics:** 0% ■ **Population:** 4,000,000

**Government:** Representative Democracy ■ **Law Level:** Permissive ■ **Tech Level:** VIII

**Hooks:** Resource Extraction, Weird Cultural Practice

Ulmo began its existence as a mining colony established by Terrans who wanted to create a male-only society. They reproduced through the creation of “true sons” — cloned copies of themselves. Over time, Ulmo’s mineral wealth was such that it attracted many others, including females, to the colony. The founders’ original intentions did not withstand the onslaught of newcomers, but the practice of cloning oneself to create offspring did. Today, a sizable percentage of the natives of Ulmo are clones of their ancestors.

## THE INIROT

The Inirot are a sapient species native to the world the Hen Jaa call Hrang (but which the Inirot themselves call Atgara). Prior to first contact with the Hen Jaa a century ago, the Inirot had achieved Tech Level V and were beginning to launch satellites and other artificial objects into orbit. Consequently, they were no match for the Hen Jaa, who quickly overwhelmed them and established a colony on their homeworld, which now serves as the capital for the Hen Jaa holdings in Limzano.

### PHYSIOLOGY

The Inirot are non-humanoid beings. On first glance, their bodies look similar to Terran arthropods, with a large central body covered in chitin underneath of which are eight powerful legs ending in claw-like feet. However, unlike arthropods, the Inirot have no distinct head. Instead, an array of sensory organs, including four eyes on stalks are located in a cavity on one side of their bodies. Four limbs ending in eight manipulative digits are spread evenly about their bodies. An illustration of an Inirot can be seen on p. 214.

The Inirot possess two genders, male and female, although individual members of the species may change gender several times over the course of a lifetime. 1-3 young grow inside the body of their mother for 7 standard months, after which they are expelled and can, with the help of their mother, survive. The Inirot consist largely on a vegetarian diet, but are in fact omnivorous, eating meat when the opportunity arises. Inirot fertility is low, resulting in a slow population growth.

### PSYCHOLOGY

The Inirot have a very weak sense of individuality, especially when compared to species like Terrans or even the Hen Jaa. Some have described them as “natural communists,” but, like all such descriptions, it does not do adequately capture the nuances of their psychology. Suffice it to say that the Inirot work well together in groups and find it easy to sublimate their own desires for the good of their fellows, should the situation demand it. Thus, acquisitiveness has little hold over them. Like Terrans, though, the Inirot are insatiably curious and genuinely interested in new ideas and experiences, which may explain why, despite their



harsh treatment at their hands, many continue to see the Hen Jaa invasion as not a wholly bad turn of events.

## HISTORY

As noted above, the Inirots evolved on Hrang and slowly became its dominant species. Their society advanced over the course of many millennia, eventually entering an industrial age. It was at this time that the Hen Jaa appeared, whom the Inirots initially welcomed as visitors from the stars. Even after it became clear that the Hen Jaa did not have peaceful intentions, the Inirots did not change their opinions of them, instead hoping that they might, by their own actions, convince the Hen Jaa to treat them as partners rather than as subjects. So far, this tactic has born little fruit, which is why a small but growing number of Inirots have decided to fight back and look to the Terran State for aid.

## SOCIETY

Inirots society is so slow-moving and conservative that it, as one Terran wag joked, “makes the Czanik look like rebellious youths.” Paradoxically, the Inirots are profoundly curious about the universe and its workings, but they possess a skeptical streak, a combination that ensures that change, when it comes, does so at a glacial pace. That’s why it’s taken over a century of occupation by the Hen Jaa before even a minority of the Inirots have decided that rebellion is the best course of action. These aliens have no experience of or need for a strong government as Terrans understand it, instead working, almost spontaneously, as a “distributed network” with others of their kind. This makes their rebel cells both very effective and quite difficult to quash, much to the chagrin of the Hen Jaa.

## TRAITS

Inirots have Armor Restriction, Curious, Extra Arms (x1), and Natural Armor (10 AV). They gain 5 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and abilities.

# APPENDIX A: LINGUA TERRA

As noted elsewhere in this rulebook, Lingua Terra is the common language of the *THOUSAND SUNS* meta-setting, represented in the text by the real-world constructed international auxiliary language of Esperanto. Since Esperanto is likely unfamiliar to most readers of this rulebook, this appendix provides an introduction to its pronunciation and a very limited vocabulary to facilitate its use in play, particularly when it comes to names of characters and starships. Even so, only sparing use of Esperanto is recommended. Players will likely become frustrated if they feel as if they *must* use an unfamiliar language just to play a roleplaying game.

This appendix is by no means a true introduction to the Esperanto language, and the combination or modification of words is beyond its scope. Those GMs and players looking for further information or inspiration, however, are encouraged to refer to printed and online resources devoted to the subject matter.

## ALPHABET AND PRONUNCIATION

The 28-letter alphabet of Lingua Terra is:

a b c ĉ d e f g ĝ h ĥ i j ĵ k l m n o p r s ŝ t u ŭ v z

All letters are pronounced approximately as in 21<sup>st</sup> century English, with exceptions detailed below. The alphabet does not include the letters q, w, x, or y. It includes 6 letters that use diacritics: ĉ, ĝ, ĥ, ĵ, ŝ and ŭ – that is, c, g, h, j, s with a circumflex (^), and u with a breve (˘). These letters are written and pronounced as follows:

c – ts, a “z” sound, as in “rats.” Therefore the word for “space,” spaco, is spot-so, not spacko

ĉ – ch, as in “chinchilla”

ĝ – j, as in “jump”

ĥ – ch, hard, as in the Scottish “loch”

j – y, as in “year”

ĵ – zh, as the French would pronounce Je in Je ne sais quoi

ŝ – sh, as in “shy”

ŭ – often with aŭ (like “bough”) or eŭ (like a snob might say “oh”); or as the consonant w, where ŭa sounds like waa



## BASIC PHRASES

Bye!, Ĝis!  
 Farewell, Adiaŭ  
 Good day, Bonan tagon  
 Good evening, Bonan vesperon  
 Good luck, Bonan ŝancon  
 Good morning, Bonan matenon  
 Good night, Bonan nokton  
 Hello, Saluton  
 No, Ne  
 Oath! (curse) Blafemo!  
 Thank you, Dankon  
 Welcome, Bonvenon  
 Yes, Jes

## NAMES (FOR TERRANS)

Adorinda (Feminine, "Adorable")  
 Aleksandro (Male, Alexander)  
 Amika (Feminine, "Friendly")  
 Aminda (Feminine, "Lovable")  
 Antonio (Masculine, Anthony)  
 Brava (Feminine, "Brave")  
 Ĉiela (Feminine, "Heavenly")  
 Fajra (Feminine, "Fiery")  
 Gaja (Feminine, "Glad")  
 Ĝeorgio (Masculine, George)  
 Jakobo (Masculine, James)  
 Johane (Masculine, John)  
 Jozefo (Masculine, Joseph)  
 Juvela (Feminine, "Jewel-Like")  
 Koralo (Feminine, "Coral")  
 Ludoviko (Masculine, Louis)  
 Merita (Feminine, "Meritorious")  
 Miela (Feminine, "Honey Sweet")  
 Mikele (Masculine, Michael)  
 Mirinda (Feminine, "Wonderful")  
 Nikolao (Masculine, Nicholas)  
 Orabela (Feminine, "Golden Beautiful")  
 Paŭlo (Masculine, Paul)  
 Petro (Masculine, Peter)  
 Rozabela (Feminine, "Rosy Beautiful")  
 Vilhelmo (Masculine, William)

## NAMES (FOR STARSHIPS)

Audacious, *Maltimēga*  
 Bayonet, *Bajoneto*  
 Benefactor, *Bonfaristo*  
 Blade (knife), *Tranĉanto*  
 Blaze, *Incendio*  
 Bountiful, *Malavara*  
 Bravery, *Braveco*  
 Capable, *Capabla*  
 Comet, *Kometo*  
 Confidence, *Konfidencio*  
 Conqueror, *Venkanto*  
 Constellation, *Stelaro*  
 Constitution, *Konstitucio*  
 Dauntless, *Sentima*  
 Dawn, *Tagiĝo*  
 Defender, *Defendisto*  
 Dolphin, *Delfeno*  
 Dominant, *Potenco*  
 Dominion, *Regeco*  
 Dragon, *Drako*  
 Dragonfly, *Libelo*  
 Eagle, *Aglo*  
 Eclipse, *Eklipsi*  
 Ecliptic, *Ekliptiko*  
 Endure, *Daŭri*  
 Enterprise, *Entrepreno*  
 Evening Star, *Vespera*  
 Excellence, *Boneco*  
 Falcon, *Falko*  
 Forbearance, *Tolero*  
 Freedom, *Libereco*  
 Furious, *Furioza*  
 Glorious, *Gloro*  
 Halcyon, *Alciono*  
 Hammer, *Marteli*  
 Harrier, *Leporhundo*  
 Havoc, *Ĥaoso*  
 Immortal, *Senmorta*  
 Jaguar, *Jaguaro*  
 Journey, *Vojaĝo*  
 Judicious, *Prudenta*  
 Justice, *Justeco*  
 Lancet, *Lanceto*  
 Lightning, *Fulmo*  
 Lion, *Leono*  
 Majestic, *Majesta*  
 Merciful, *Kompata*  
 Messenger, *Sendito*  
 Nightingale, *Najtingalo*  
 Prudence, *Singardemo*  
 Republic, *Respubliko*  
 Resolute, *Decida*  
 Salamander, *Salamandro*  
 Serpent, *Serpento*  
 Solace, *Komforti*  
 Sunset, *Subiri*  
 Supremacy, *Superegeco*  
 Swift, *Rapida*  
 Sword, *Glavo*  
 Titanic, *Grandega*  
 Tranquility, *Trankvileco*  
 Unification, *Unuigo*  
 Valiant, *Brava*  
 Victorious, *Venkinta*  
 Victory, *Venko*  
 Vindication, *Pravigeco*  
 Weapon, *Batalilo*  
 Whale, *Baleno*  
 Zealous, *Fervora*  
 Zenith, *Zenito*

## TITLES AND RANKS

Captain (military), *kapitano*  
 Captain (ship), *ŝipestro*  
 Citizen, *urbano*  
 Commandant, *komandanto*  
 Commander, *komandoro*  
 Commissioner, *komisario*  
 Comrade, *kamarado*  
 Doctor, *doktoro*  
 Emperor, *imperiestro*  
 Empress, *imperiestrino*  
 First Citizen urbanestro  
 King, *reĝo*  
 Ma'am, *sinjorino*  
 Master (of house), *mastro*  
 Master (of profession), *majstro*  
 Master (teacher), *instruisto*  
 Minister (political), *ministro*  
 Miss, *fraŭlino*  
 Mister/Sir, *sinjoro*  
 Mistress (of house), *mastrino*  
 Mistress (teacher), *instruistino*  
 President, *prezidanto*  
 Queen, *reĝino*  
 Regent, *reganto*  
 Senator, *senatano*

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The most immediate influences upon *THOUSAND SUNS* were probably Poul Anderson, Bertram Chandler, Frank Herbert, Larry Niven, H. Beam Piper, and Jerry Pournelle, but all of the above authors, as well as many not listed, certainly helped to shape the form of the game. For this reason, and for the hours of reading enjoyment they have given me, I heartily recommend the works of these fine authors to you.

# APPENDIX O: OPEN GAME LICENSE

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# THOUSAND SUNS CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER

SKILLS & PSI POWERS

RANK ABL TN UNTRAINED

ACTION  
POINTS

HOOBS

BODY

DEXTERITY

PERCEPTION

PRESENCE

WILL

INITIATIVE RANK

$[(\text{Dexterity} + \text{Perception}) \div 2]$

VITALITY

$[(\text{Body} + \text{Will}) \div 2] \times 5$

|                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |      |
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EQUIPMENT

WEAPON

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|                    |      |   |
|--------------------|------|---|
| Acrobatics         | DEX  |   |
| Animal Handling    | PRES |   |
| Athletics          | BODY | × |
| Bargain            | PRES | × |
| Bureaucracy        | PERC | × |
| Computers          | PERC | × |
| Culture (t)        | PERC |   |
| Defend             | DEX  | × |
| Diplomacy          | PRES | × |
| Dodge              | DEX  | × |
| Empathy            | PERC | × |
| Engineering        | PERC |   |
| Gaming             | PERC | × |
| Gunnery            | PERC |   |
| Heavy Weapons      | DEX  |   |
| Intrusion          | DEX  | × |
| Intimidation       | PRES | × |
| Investigation      | PERC | × |
| Language (t)       | PERC |   |
| Language (t)       | PERC |   |
| Life Sciences      | PERC |   |
| Medical Sciences   | PERC |   |
| Melee              | DEX  | × |
| Observe            | PERC | × |
| Performance        | PRES | × |
| Physical Sciences  | PERC |   |
| Piloting           | DEX  |   |
| Profession (t)     | PERC |   |
| Profession (t)     | PERC |   |
| Resist             | WILL | × |
| Shoot              | DEX  | × |
| Socialize          | PRES | × |
| Social Sciences    | PERC |   |
| Space Sciences     | PERC |   |
| Stealth            | DEX  | × |
| Streetwise         | PRES | × |
| Subterfuge         | PERC |   |
| Survival           | PERC |   |
| Tactics            | PERC |   |
| Technical Sciences | PERC |   |
| Unarmed Combat     | DEX  | × |
| Vehicle Operation  | DEX  | × |

# THOUSAND SUNS BACKGROUND SHEET

CHARACTER

GENDER

CAREERS

XP EARNED

HOMEWORLD

SPECIES

AGE

XP SPENT

## DESCRIPTION

## MORE SKILLS & PSI

RANK ABL TN UNTRAINED

## HISTORY

## SPACESHIPS AND VEHICLES

## NOTES